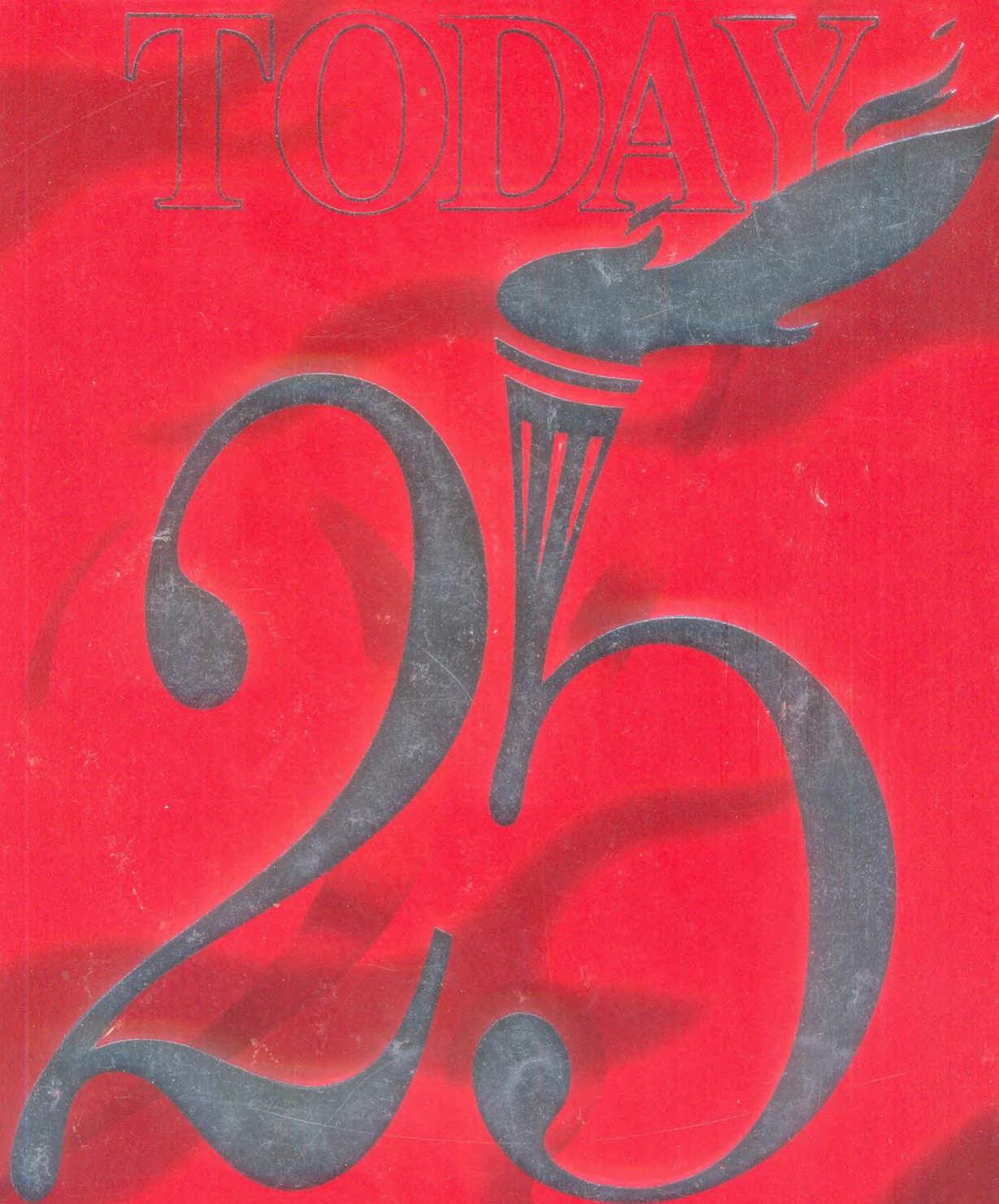


SPECIAL ISSUE

DECEMBER 25, 2000

# INDIA TODAY



## Incredible Years

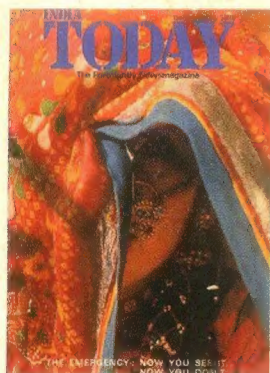


# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

25  
YEARS



Sometimes success is born out of failure. INDIA TODAY was meant only for Indians living abroad when it started. The idea didn't work and only then were copies put out in the Indian market.



Strange things happen in life. Sometimes success is born out of failure. So it was with INDIA TODAY. It was a magazine meant only for Indians living abroad when it started on December 15, 1975. The idea didn't work and only then were copies put out in the Indian market. Added to that, it was launched during the Emergency. It was headed by a chartered accountant-turned-printer (that's me) and a staff of half a dozen bright-eyed youngsters whose journalistic experience would fit into a matchbox. Not the most auspicious of beginnings for a national newsmagazine. And journalists were regarded as such low life that I recall one of the scions of the Modi industrial family asking me,

"Aroon, yaar, tum yeh bhookhe aur nange profession mein kaise padh gaye ho (Aroon, how come you've got into this profession of the naked and the hungry)?" Not a comment that lifted my spirits.

But as I said strange things happen in life. Today, INDIA TODAY has a readership of 15.3 million in English and its four regional language editions and is the single most read publication in the country. Its editorial team has grown to 98. The magazine is at the core of a multimedia group with television, Internet, music, books and education divisions. The Group now has a staff strength of 1,008, of which 330 are journalists. And along the way, we fulfilled our original mission by starting, in 1982, an international edition that is very successful and is circulated in 104 countries.

I'm often asked: what's the secret of the success? I don't have a specific answer. I know it is not just one factor but a combination of many. Perhaps it's the fanatical belief that what matters in a publication is editorial excellence and credibility. Spend all your resources on getting it right and the rest

of the financial equation will work itself out. For better or worse, we are an editorially driven media organisation as against a marketing one.

Protect your credibility at any cost. You are only as vulnerable as you want to be. If you make a mistake, apologise and try and make amends. Write for the reader, not for journalists. Make your page striking with elegant design, relevant pictures and stylish writing. And above all, never be satisfied.

## Masthead of the first issue

### INDIA TODAY

The Fortnightly Newsmagazine

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The take-off point for INDIA TODAY was when Mrs Indira Gandhi lifted the Emergency in January 1977 and called elections. It was as if a huge dam had burst. After 18 months of censorship, the public was starved of information and stories of the excesses of the Emergency were pouring out. There was a political frenzy the likes of which I have never seen since. There could not have been a better time for the media.

What followed was even better. The supremely confident Mrs Gandhi and Congress were decimated and the motley crowd of the Janata Party formed a government headed by Morarji Desai, to start one of the most farcical and hilarious periods in Indian political history. The time had come for INDIA TODAY.

It was good fortune—being at the right place at the right time. All we needed was to do the right thing. And our young staff went after the news with boundless energy, racy writing and a daring as if there were no tomorrow. They had no ideological baggage or vested interests. They just went out there and told it the way it was. They did not know any better. And thank God for that! INDIA TODAY's circulation grew in leaps and bounds. The magazine had started with a circulation of 5,000 copies and till the lifting of the Emergency in January 1977, it sold only 15,000 copies. But by the time the Janata Party came to power in March 1977, we had reached 50,000 copies and crossed 1,00,000 in December 1978.

The next turning point was when Mrs Gandhi withdrew support to the Charan Singh government in 1979 and elections were scheduled for January 1980. It was INDIA TODAY's first election after it had gained a certain amount of notoriety as an upcoming publication. Our circulation had reached



1,40,000 copies. Opportunity knocked on our door again. Two young academicians from the Delhi School of Economics, Pranjoy Roy, 30, and Ashok Lahiri, 28, walked into my office and said they had developed a model that would predict elections if someone would fund the opinion polling.

It seemed a hare-brained idea that you could predict the voting behaviour of a disparate electorate of 363 million by talking to 8,000 odd people. I suspected the big dailies had not bought it—but I took the risk.

In the letter from the editor in the issue with the prediction (January 15, 1980), I printed a poster that said: "Behold, the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out." I had written in the letter, "At present the whole Indian press is in the prediction game but instead of following a scientific method, their predictions are based mainly on a subjective guessing game. INDIA TODAY has used a carefully planned scientific method to make a definitive statement of the election results ... We could be wrong. But then we could just as well be right." The opinion poll had predicted a sweep for the Congress against all prevailing wisdom—and that's what happened. The gods had smiled on us again. And opinion polling was born in India.

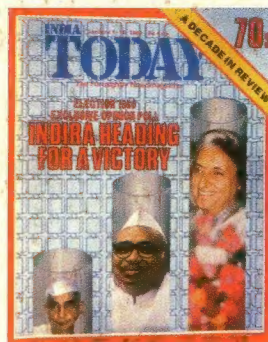
This raised the credibility of INDIA TODAY enormously. It was no longer just an upstart publication but one that had to be taken seriously. So much so that soon after this I got invited to lunch by the doyen of Indian industry, G.D. Birla. I arrived for lunch and found it was just me and the four Birla brothers. They started to quiz me about the political scenario. I was flattered. Also I think the old man, whose empire included the venerable *Hindustan Times*,

was curious to know how this rank outsider with no media pedigree had made it in journalism. I am sure Mr Modi would have been impressed at his "*bhookh-nange*" friend being given such attention.

If that were not enough, we had other important people reading and responding to our articles. In July 1979, J.R.D. Tata wrote a letter reacting to an interview in which the then Union steel minister, Biju Patnaik, had spoken of nationalising Tata Steel. Tata wrote, "The only significant meeting was when he (Patnaik) suggested that I hand over Tata Steel to him in return for which he would hand over the steel industry to me."

The 1980s was dominated by the Gandhi family. We never had an easy relationship with them. Sanjay Gandhi hated us for our exposures on the Emergency. I had one icy meeting with him before the 1980 election to say we wanted to cover his side of the story but couldn't do so if we didn't have access to him or his mother. As luck would have it the issue of INDIA TODAY then on the stands had carried exclusive extracts from Henry Kissinger's book, in which he made rude remarks about Mrs Gandhi. Sanjay pushed the issue before me and said, "How do you say you are not against us?" My efforts to explain the difference between Kissinger's views and ours escaped him. The meeting ended abruptly.

Mrs Gandhi never gave us an interview and called us "downright anti-national" when one of our correspondents asked her a question at a press conference. It was subsequent to INDIA TODAY putting on the cover the massacre in Nellie, Assam, of 1,383 people. The issue came out while Mrs Gandhi was playing host to the Non-Aligned Movement in 1983 and she felt it embarrassed her. She was not pleased either



**It seemed hare-brained to predict the vote of 363 million by talking to 8,000 people. But the gods smiled on us.**

when INDIA TODAY exposed the training of Sri Lankan Tamil militants by the Government in Tamil Nadu. After her tragic death, her mantle passed on to Rajiv Gandhi. Hope sprung afresh in a traumatised country.

As it happened, Rajiv had been a classmate of mine though we were never friends. On the Golden Jubilee of Doon School in 1985, Rajiv came there and at the time of the reunion photo, somehow, I was on the fringe of the group. The photographer asked me to kneel in front and Rajiv said, "Look, the Press is at my feet." The class of 1960 guffawed. Sadly, the Press did not stay at his feet for long. I saw my classmate sink into the Bofors quagmire. It was sad to watch him lose his innocence and idealism. We ran a cover titled "The Changing Face of Rajiv Gandhi", which chronicled this change. During the

election campaign in 1991, I met Rajiv at a roadside dhaba in Bihar's wilderness 10 days before his assassination and he was back to his charming self, clearly chastened by his 1989 defeat. His death parachuted the ready-to-retire P.V. Narasimha Rao into the PMO, which only reinforced one primary rule of Indian politics: never write off a politician.

What dominated the first half of the next decade was the economic agenda. It was the Manmohan Singh era of liberalisation and the stock market boom. INDIA TODAY's circulation crossed the 4,00,000 mark in October 1995. And on June 9, 1997, we took a landmark decision and turned weekly. In spite of doubling the frequency we not only held on to our circulation but increased it—it is now 4,24,000.

The second half of the 1990s saw the rise of the BJP, the decline of the Congress and the advent of coalition politics, which is just that much more grist for our news mill. And that's the point. India is never dull. News survives on change and India as a country is in a constant churn. There will always be plenty of stories for us to tell you. The way these stories come to you may change, whether it is paper or screen, but I don't believe the reading experience will ever be fully replaced by an audio-visual one. The power of the written word will always be supreme. Our challenge is to continue to tell you compelling stories with words and pictures.

As they say, in the age of convergence content is king. And we have plenty of that. So keep the faith—and happy reading for the next 25 years; and beyond.

(Aron Purie)



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# 25 1975 - 2000 NEWSMAKERS

■ by Sudeep CHAKRAVARTI

WHILE a huge cast of characters has participated in the making of history in the past quarter of a century, a few have had far greater impact than others, substantially changing the way we live, think and work—for better or worse. Some, like Indira, have moulded India through her undeniable strength—and follies. Others, like the Ambanis, have redefined wealth and how business is conducted. And superstar Amitabh, who continues to reign. This is a take on 25 newsmakers, people who in these incredible years have shaped our lives, touched our hearts and contributed in great measure to our future.



NEWSMAKERS

25  
YEARS

# Indira GANDHI

1917 - 1984

## THE EMPRESS

Because she won our hearts, our minds and our biggest war with Pakistan. Because this leader of leaders, with amazing myopia, set Indians against India and the dominoes tumbled with deadly precision in Punjab, Kashmir, Assam and a hundred other places where light never reached but anger and humiliation sparked a fire that almost tore the heart out of a nation. Because she showed what power could do—use it one way, and it sets India on a path of self-sufficiency and self-respect; use it another way, and an Emergency demolishes independence. Because she epitomised *shakti* and showed India's battered, aspiring women how to reach for the sky. Because she channelled Dynasty in a democracy, with her sons and with her life. Because that told a large part of India that a country of one billion can't be a family affair. Because Indira may have been India, but India knew better.

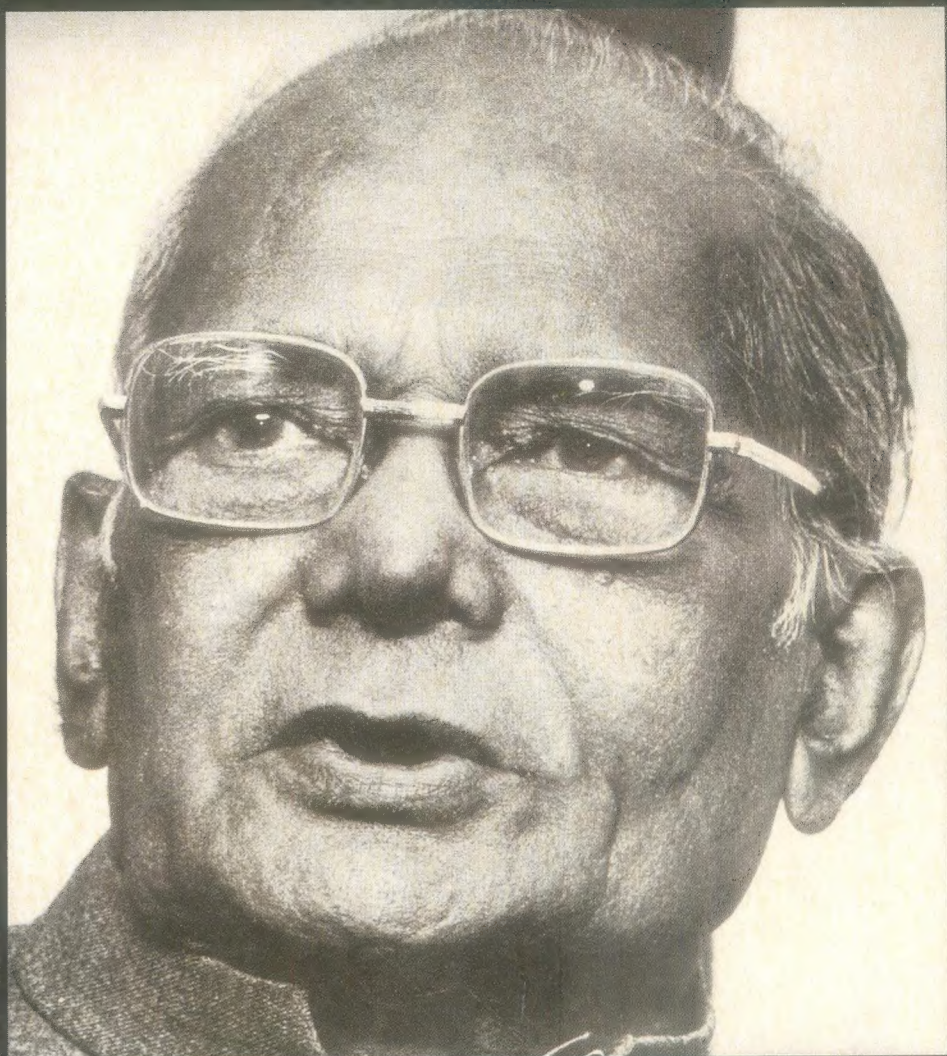
BHAWAN SINGH







SURESH KARADIA



# Jayaprakash NARAYAN

1902 - 1979

THE REVOLUTIONARY

Because the man who renounced electoral politics found in the dying moments of his life so much strength to fight for democracy that he completely unnerved Indira Gandhi. Because he was the moral authority that toppled her. Because through the Emergency, he was the beacon, the rallying point, for hope and liberty. Because he bore the indignity of being used by the Janata Party's "*khichdi*" coalition with the fortitude with which he gave up conventional fame—sometimes called the best prime minister India never had—for a failed shot at total revolution. Because JP is still the enduring acronym for right against wrong.





NAMAS BHOJANI

# Rajiv GANDHI

1944 - 1991

THE DREAMER

Because hope suddenly had a new meaning, and India, a shot at a future that worked faster. Because as he dreamed, we did too, of an India that could dream of being there with the best. Because this amateur, reluctant politician, the former airline pilot with an easy attitude, easy grin, and eye for photography showed politics needn't be cynical, that a right team in the right place could make all the difference and give a struggling country a new buzzword: potential. Because his peace deals in Punjab and Assam showed India wants to live without violence. Because the Bofors scandal, the mess in Sri Lanka with the Indian Peace Keeping Force, and wayward advisers showed how much blind faith we put in our leaders, who think nothing of frittering away a 400-plus majority in the Lok Sabha. Because hope never had a harder fall.

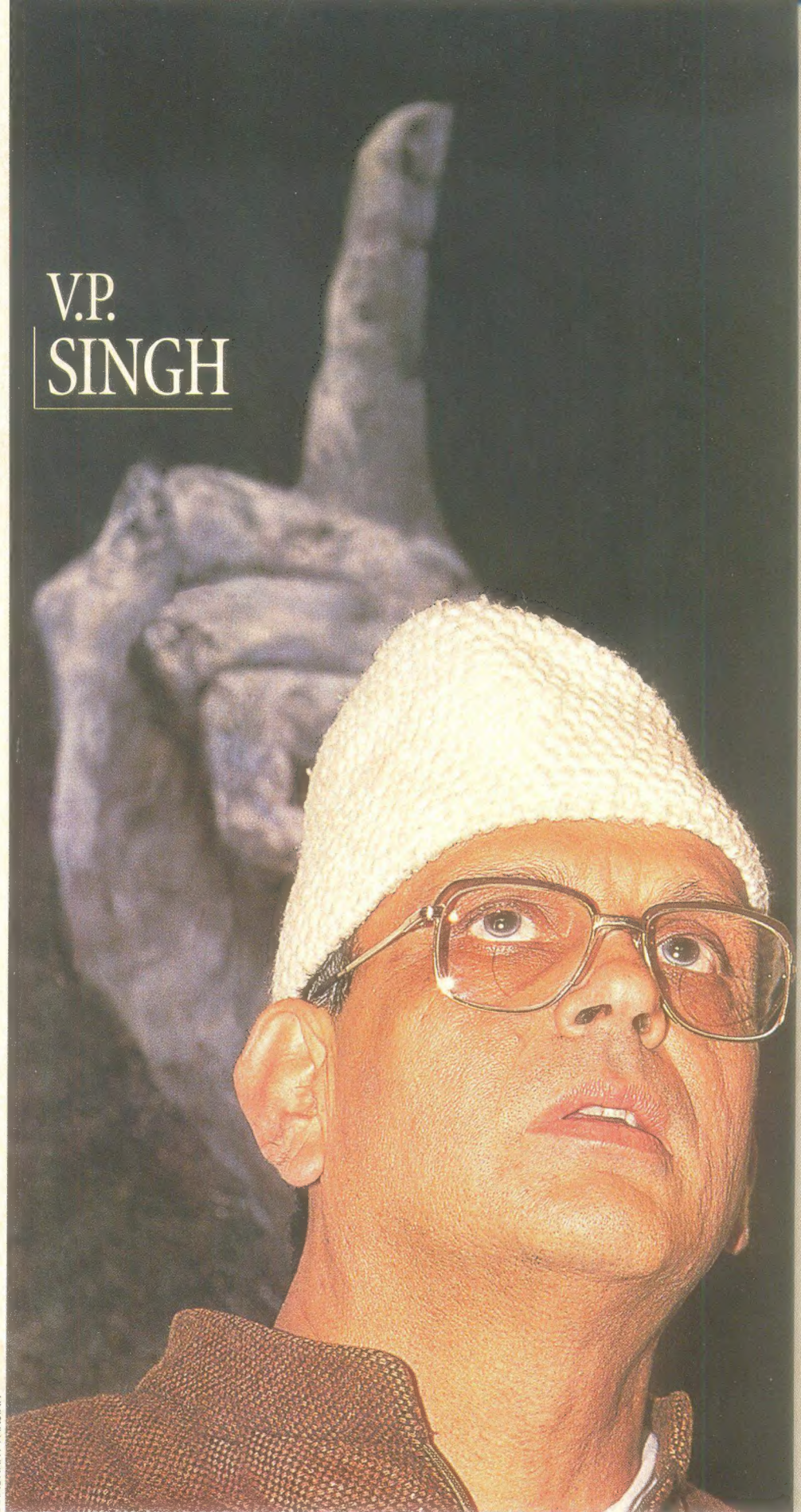


## CASTE WARRIOR

Because the Raja of Manda is a redoubt for Machiavelli. Because being Mr Clean as the energetic finance minister in Rajiv Gandhi's cabinet made him a symbol of purity, a person whose motive was for country, not The Chair. Because few had the foresight about the impact Bofors would have on Rajiv, and the incredible risk-taking ability to simply walk out, make a new life for himself and lie in wait to be the next prime minister. Because to keep himself in power, and also to check the growing influence of the BJP, he unleashed a force in 1990 that was socially unpopular but politically correct: implementation of the Mandal Commission report that reserved government jobs for "backward" castes. Because that put birth over merit, even as it empowered beyond measure. Because nobody has the guts to reverse that decision. Because the Raja who paints and writes poetry must sometimes ask his muse: did I do right?

## V.P. SINGH

PRASHANT PANJARI







## Atal Bihari VAJPAYEE

GENIAL BUDDHA

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Because the "mask" of the BJP has saved the party from certain self-destruction, and with his moderate, genial approach led it to rule India. Because he took the ultimate gamble by ordering nuclear explosions, a deterrence against enemies of India, forever changing the equation with the post Cold War world. Because it brought BJP mileage that looks good to hold for two administrations, winning for the BJP and its allies an election when the formation seemed doomed to fall apart, elevating a party largely seen as lacking spine to one that embodies give-a-damn strength. Because he is arguably the best parliamentarian free India has, and to hear him speak in Hindi and connect with the crowd is a dream. Because he thought nothing of teaming up with the Congress to score for India an emphatic victory against Pakistan in international human-rights debates. Because he rode the bus to Lahore. Because, ironies apart, the Buddha really smiled. Because for the BJP, the Middle Ages seem to be finally over.



# Laloo YADAV

## MR CHUTZPAH

Because he has shown, tragically, that governance means nothing, that brute strength and corruption is the cure for all that is good. Because during his 10-year reign of real-time and proxy, Bihar has become the land of the dispossessed, the damned and the undeveloped, a global example of bizarre poverty. Because only Laloo would have the chutzpah to install his wife as chief minister using loopholes of democracy—and Bihar would let him. Because behind the façade of a buffoon lies a razor-sharp mind that intuitively tweaks the passions of caste and creed; a mind that has changed modern Indian politics—and kept him in power. Because he is an example of what not to be.





PRASHANT PANJIAR

Because politics is about waving a flag, and this man waved it more effectively than most. Because there was—and probably still is—enough anger, resentment and faith in India to transmogrify a Toyota truck into Ram's vehicle of choice, even as Advani, a mere mortal, stood on top as it slow-rolled in 1990 across India's geography and innate sense of guilt, exhorting Hindus if they cared that their heritage was being messed with, their pride taken for granted by a callous state. Because he sensed the saffron surge better than anybody else, grabbed the opportunity and displayed enormous stamina for battle and to see things through.

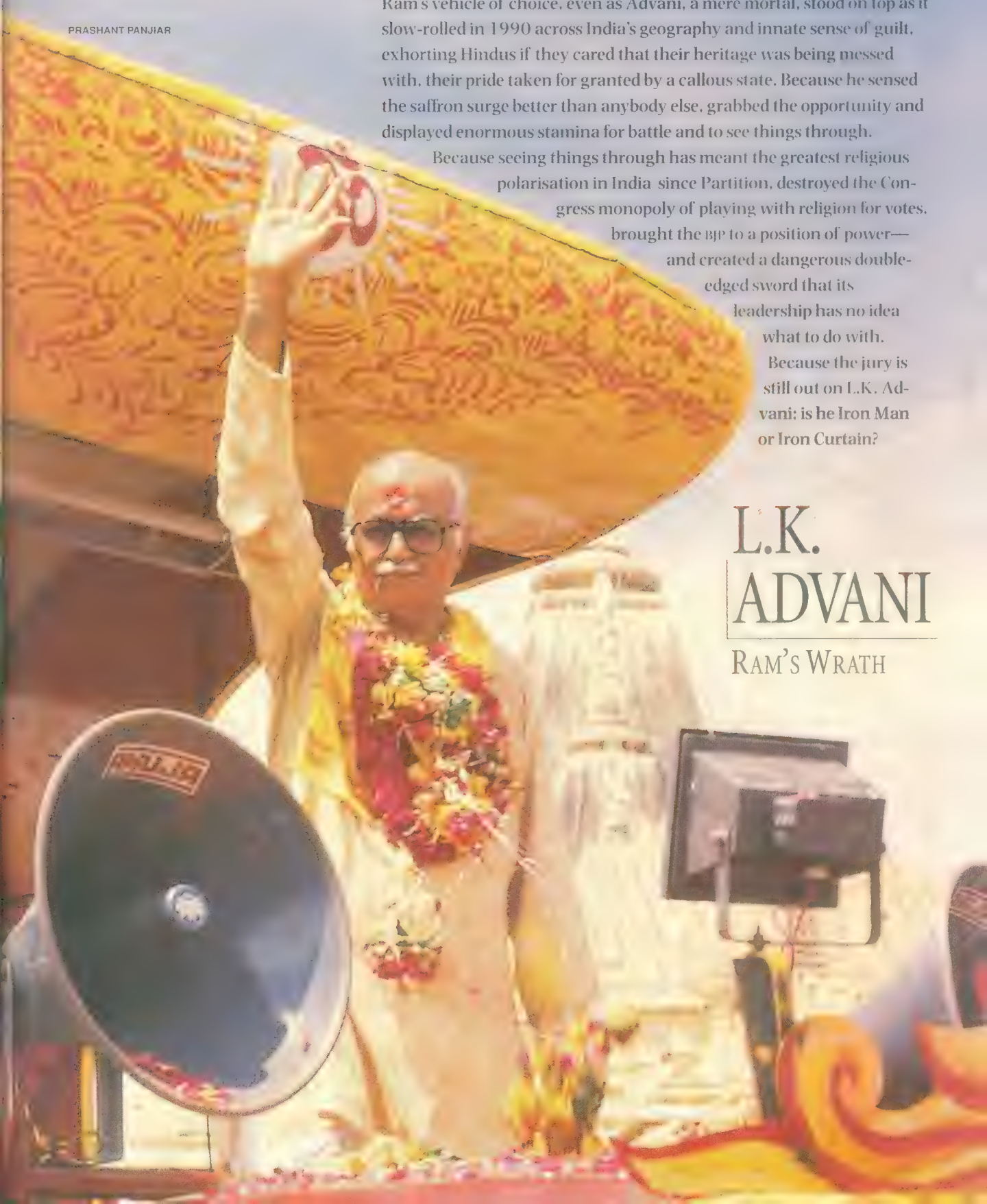
Because seeing things through has meant the greatest religious polarisation in India since Partition, destroyed the Congress monopoly of playing with religion for votes, brought the BJP to a position of power—and created a dangerous double-edged sword that its

leadership has no idea what to do with.

Because the jury is still out on L.K. Advani: is he Iron Man or Iron Curtain?

## L.K. ADVANI

RAM'S WRATH





NEWSMAKERS  
**25**  
YEARS

Because he showed power has a quality of resurrection as effective as a miracle. Because he created history by being the first prime minister of a minority government in India to complete his term of office. Because that displayed political skills so great, and so brazen, that he is also India's only Prime Minister called to court for bribing to keep his office. Because this ultimate insider never let on what was on his mind, even if it seemed there was nothing. Because his art of stalling changed the way modern Indian history would read, as he sat, like Nero, and watched Ayodhya crumble, India burn and mobs pillage. Because he was the first Congress prime minister to turn right and unleash an economic reforms agenda. Because his pout is the greatest delight for cartoonists since Indira Gandhi's nose. Because he is the Congress' comeback man.

## P.V. Narasimha RAO

THE SURVIVOR



PRASHAN  
PANJARI





PRASHANT PANJIAR

# Manmohan SINGH

THE ECOMARK

Because he is the antithesis, proving there is no rule that a life-long socialist cannot become the person who initials India's economic liberalisation. Because he went from a small, dingy dig across the elevator at the Prime Minister's Office to a much larger, plusher office across the road at the Ministry of Finance, in one smooth mind and body makeover. Because the soul, though leaning somewhat to the Left and government control, was often the only thing that looked good for five years from 1991, as the Rao administration went from one corruption scandal to another, and the financial system simply fell apart with 1993's stock scam—on his watch. Because he held the economy together with force of personality even as the momentum ran out. Because in the summer of 1991 it seemed India could become a world power—and the feeling hasn't gone away. Because some people still think he is the finance minister.



BHAWAN SINGH



## Ramnath GOENKA

1904 - 1991

THE BARON

Because how many people do you know who took on Indira Gandhi, the Emergency, A.R. Antulay, the surging Ambanis, Rajiv Gandhi—and won? Because for all his weaknesses, idiosyncrasies, legendary ruthlessness and fickleness with friends, the combative proprietor of *The Indian Express* is a pillar Indian journalism still rests on, the pillar that has etched on it a key element of modern democracy: a free press. Because he stoked the need for right to information. Because he stoked crusading editors who could ensure it. Because fear wasn't a word in his lexicon. Because if it were not for him, you may not have been reading this.

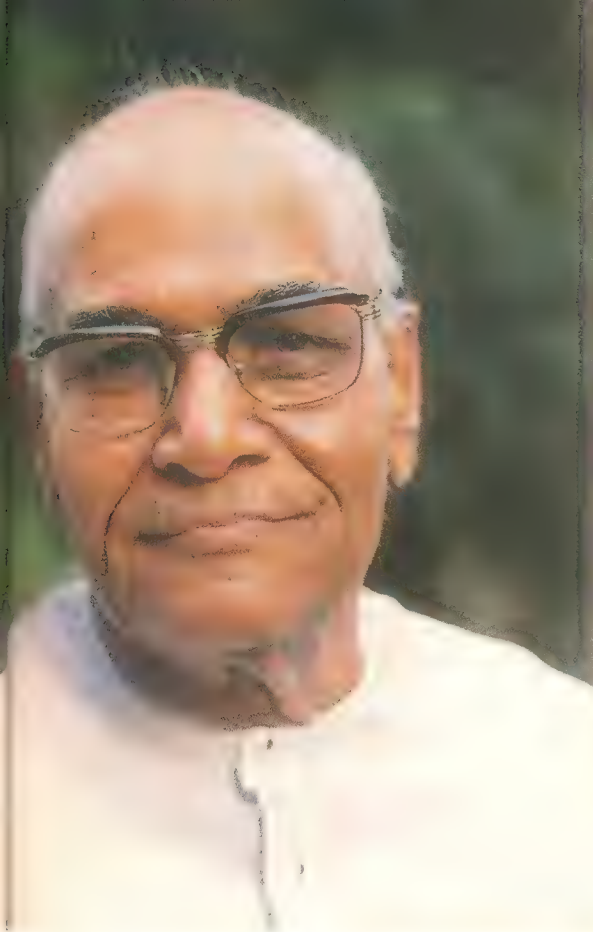
## N.T. RAMA RAO

1928 - 1996

FEDERAL GADFLY

Because he made us laugh with antics like wearing a sari, donning saffron robes and turban, posing like some new-age Vivekananda as he blustered his way through press conferences and TV sound-bites, and all the while devotees fell at his feet. Because the former Telugu film-star who would be king knew he wasn't the court jester; while the world laughed at his accent and a party called Telugu Desam, he drew the crowds. Because he first took over the hearts and minds of the people of Andhra, then Andhra from the Congress, then took Andhra to the Centre as a power broker in coalition politics of the late 1980s and finally, spread the idea of dominant federalism based on regional identity to other parts of India that had quite forgotten the country was carved with the scalpel of ethnic and linguistic needs in the first place. Because Indians can't resist determined eccentrics.





# A.P.J. Abdul KALAM

## TECHNO YOGI

Because the long-haired Peter Pan of India's defence business is as comfortable being photographed with a veena and a copy of *The Life Divine* as being photographed in front of missiles that are part of security lexicons worldwide: Agni, Prithvi, Akash ... Because he used very little except hard-work, motivation and practical approach to lead a brilliant team of what the world for long considered as garage technicians into changing the threat perception towards India. Because this boat-owner's son who sold newspapers to pay school fees is the key behind India's nuclear weapons programme, the country's major meal ticket in diplomacy. Because if you are called Avul Pakir Jainulabddin Abdul Kalam, people's expectations tend to be pretty daunting. Because APJ has actually lived up to it. Because he quite likes being called a techno-yogi.

BHAWAN SINGH







# The AMBANIS

## THE MONEY MACHINE

Because Croesus would understand. Because nobody has sailed from Gulf of Zilch to the Ocean of Plenty in quite the same way, in 25 years taking business from next to nothing to over Rs 20,000 crore a year, becoming the biggest and the most profitable corporation in India, a byword for scale, speed and quality. Because they practically built the Indian stock market, influenced it, creating wealth and aspiration for a million people years before liberalisation and info-tech czars came along. Because nothing stops them: not finance ministers, nor prime ministers, nor a war with Pakistan a year ago, its missiles a short flight away from Reliance's refinery in Jamnagar, the biggest in Asia. Because for better or worse, Dhirubhai Ambani rewrote rules, crushed competition, and networked like there was a tomorrow. Because that game plan took established business families who thought *they* wrote the rules by the scruff of their self-indulgent, shareholder-hoodwinking necks and shook the living daylights out of them. Because that created a new breed of entrepreneurs who rode the waves of adamant liberalisation. Because Dhirubhai's boys, Anil and Mukesh, have learnt to actually think bigger than their father. Because, thank heavens, the Ambanis have finally learnt to chill.





# The HINDUJAS

ALWAYS IN THE MIDDLE

MADAN ARORA

Because they are everywhere. Because they are not particular about what they will trade in: if there's a major deal—trucks, howitzers, influence or information—it's likely the brotherhood will have a card to play so long as the hand is good, and anyway, they have all the jokers in the pack. Because Gopichand, Srichand, Prakash and Ashok Hinduja travel well, much like a good international wine, and are seen at tables at practically all points of the compass. Because they have a failsafe way to ensure it happens: if they aren't invited to dinner in Washington D.C., Davos, London or Delhi, they will simply sponsor a table, cost immaterial. Because British Prime Minister Tony Blair and wife Cherie attend the grand Diwali do of the world's richest NRIs. Because no other NRI family has such a hold over its country of birth, from business to higher offices in the land. Because they have survived every attempt so far to haul them in, malign them, prosecute them, and ruin them. Because they also wrote a book: it's called *Art of the Possible*.



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H K RAJASHEKAR



N.R. Narayana  
**MURTHY**  
SILICON SURFER

Because—too bad—we don't have a Bill Gates, a Steve Jobs, or a Jerry Yang (okay, so we have Sabeer Bhatia). Because a person who looks like the Nutty Professor has created a value chain of such proportion that infotech in India spells Infosys, like people say Surf for detergent audio sets. Because he institutionalised employee stock options. Because that turned blood and sweat into India's most valuable stock ever—with a market capitalisation of close to Rs 48,000 crore—and totally took over the bourses that Reliance Industries and the Ambanis had ambushed with dazzle and dividends more than a decade earlier. Because that created India's first new-economy billionaires and millionaires from the ranks of executives and techies. Because Infosys has become a million-candlepower lighthouse of Indian can-do around the world, and because of this surge, one day very soon software will be worth more to Indian exports than India's current exports combined. Because this simple man is India's first footprint to the future.





NEWSMAKERS

25  
YEARS

# Mother TERESA

1910 - 1997

BELIEVER<sub>X</sub>

Because a frame so small encased a heart big enough for the world. Because in a world when life is cheap and humanity discarded without thought, she found they were worth an idea and a mission. Because the poor in soup kitchens of New York and wasting lepers in the soul kitchens of Calcutta think she is a saint, and will not wait for beatification by the Vatican to call her one. Because when you say, "The Mother", people never ask whom you are referring to. Because her questionable ideas about right to life did not slight her right to give. Because a Nobel for Peace to an Albanian émigré brought great honour to India. Because she was the mirror to our souls, and the Missionaries of Charity will hold it up for us long after she is gone. Because a simple white sari with a blue border is among the best known uniforms in the world. Because most of the time, Mother knew best.





BHAWAN SINGH



# Salman RUSHDIE

## THE OFFENDER

Because no writer has been more—or less—read. Because *Midnight's Children* shook India, *Shame* shook Pakistan and *Satanic Verses* shook much of the world. Because no writer of Indian origin in living memory has made such a deep impact on our lives. Because it's easy to dislike him for being arrogant, nit-picky and self-absorbed, but what major writer isn't? Because his brilliant, complex prose makes characters come alive like a frenetic genie. Because a man who rarely visits the Indian subcontinent has the ability to set eerily real political and social contexts for us to smile at, think about and—if we are honest—accept. Because “writes like Rushdie” or “not like Rushdie” is still the yardstick Indian writers of English are judged by. Because without him, there would have been no Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy, or many recent literary goldfish that now live off fat advances and public disdain of Rushdie. Because he totally freaks out fundamentalists and critics, and that, is such a wonderful, brave thing to do.





# RAJNEESH

1931 1990  
GOD OF ECSTASY

Because he was the ultimate karmachameleon, going from Rajneesh Chandra Mohan to Bhagwan Rajneesh to Zorba the Buddha to Osho. Because he ran the ultimate travelling circus, from Pune to Oregon to Kulu and back to Pune. Because he had the ultimate vocabulary, from spirit to sensation to sex to sales (who do you know gave an entire discourse on the word f\*\*\*, had the gathering in splits, and laughed all the way to the bank). Because he redefined the Indian gurur, from Mahesh Yogi to Sai Baba to Srila Prabhupada, took bits from everybody, threw in marketing David Ogilvy would have been proud of and an environment that seemed tailor-made for Hugh Hefner, and brought the world to witness his weird cosmic fandance. Because he turned showmanship into a supreme art form, with a fleet of Rolls-Royce, bizarre diamond-studded fur caps, and robes in a style that appeared to have been last favoured by Chengiz Khan. Because every society needs a maverick guru. Because ochre was never sexier and religion so much fun. Because he wanted to be remembered as a nobody—tough luck.



# Sunil GAVASKAR

THE NEW DON



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Because what is there to do after you break Donald Bradman's record of most centuries—Sunil: 34, Sir Don: 29—scored in Test matches? Because there is, and this man, a shade over five feet who slammed bowlers a foot taller all over the Caribbean during his 1970 debut, just went ahead to become the first person ever to score 10,000 runs in Test cricket in 1987. Because his superb style, élan, calm, TV savvy and commercial acumen gave India its first real sporting superstar and boosted sports earnings, cricketing futures and sports management in general. Because he showed there was no indignity in living off fame even if nobody except filmstars had done it before him. Because he moved sportswriters to write things like “In the morning, he faced Imran Khan, hair flying as he ran in from the Walajah Road end. From 80 yards away I trembled, but not Gavaskar. He played about one ball in five, angering the Pathan ... After lunch, as Imran sulked at fine leg, Gavaskar calmly took apart the other bowlers.” Because he could be talking about Sachin Tendulkar.



NEWSMAKERS

25  
YEARS

# Amitabh BACHCHAN

THE LEGEND

Because he made brooding, righteous anger the most fashionable mood since the Quit India movement. Because as founder-CEO of the One Man Industry, he made it okay to be different things to different people—from beggared coolie to billionaire playboy—who always got the girl, the baddie and the pot of gold. Because he turned Bollywood into a brand name, a marketable beehive of frenzy. Because even as he battled personal failure—family gossip, failed businesses, a disastrous foray into politics, bombed movies, for a while an inability to accept he had to act his age—he was always the grand symbol of a nobody made good, and the stardust always sparkled. Because he keeps coming back, in our collective consciousness of entertainment and as that money-spinning MC of India's most successful TV show ever. Because for this man, there is no *Sunset Boulevard*.





Medha  
PATKAR

JOAN OF ACHE

Because more than 130 million people in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are still held hostage by one woman and her stubborn refusal to give in to the Narmada dam, a sobriquet for the Sardar Sarovar Project, India's biggest and most ambitious development initiative. Because that has to be the biggest outcome of protest since Mohandas Gandhi took on the British. Because she has made the cause so powerful that international media, which rarely stirs out of air-conditioned comfort in New Delhi, will gladly trek for days to listen to her by the banks of a reservoir, or inside a broken hut. Because her conviction ensures she is still bigger than flirting moths like literary glamour-puss Arundhati Roy, who are drawn to Medha because she is the flame to next big thing after India's nuclear tests. Because a do-gooder isn't always right, and Medha must now realise the battle isn't about her, but the 2,000 or so displaced people she has chosen to represent and the immense cost of lost opportunity she has placed on the country. Because even if the Supreme Court has ruled that work must continue on the dam, it won't stop her. Because this isn't the last you've heard of this Joan of Arc of the NGOs.

HEMANT PITHWA





# Jarnail Singh BHINDRANWALE

1947-1984



RAGHU RAI

## PROPHET OF HATE

Because there is a credible theory that Frankenstein grew up in Punjab. Because there have been movements to break away from India for decades—in the hilly jungles of Mizoram and Nagaland—but none that threatened to rip the heart out of India as the movement for Khalistan did, elevating terror to a religion and blood-letting to a pastime that mere children forsook their futures for. Because it snatched lives in the marketplaces of Jalandhar as heartlessly as it did in an Air-India 747 over the Atlantic. Because the self-professed saint went from an aggressive repository of tradition to committing the ultimate sacrilege in a place of worship—allowing weapons in the Golden Temple, Sikhdom's holiest shrine. Because that act led to the tragic culmination of storming the shrine by Indian troops, spilling more blood onto a land drenched in red with the lives of over 25,000 people. Because when he lay dead, riddled with bullets, he ensured that what followed was an epitaph for Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, dead from bullets fired by outraged Sikh bodyguards, a nation haunted by how the circle from mentor to murdered finally closed.

BHAWAN SINGH


# Dawood IBRAHIM

CRIME INC.

Because hatred has a tentacle plugged into power, and power into money, and money into control over people's lives. Because Dawood is the poster-boy of India's extortionists and terrorists, the CEO of a transnational corporation of trigger-happy thugs which is more feared than the crazed jihadis who want to take Kashmir from India. Because he is the robbing hood with religious appeal, seen by many fundamentalist Muslims as the righteous avenger for the destruction of the Babri Masjid in much the same way as his arch-enemy Chhota Rajan is seen as a sort of Captain India by many fundamentalist Hindus. Because we don't know of anybody who has yet refused his hospitality. Because that speaks of power so strong that it is truly frightening. Because it means that even as he rules over his empire from Karachi, Pakistan, he can do anything, anytime, in anyplace, India.







# Aishwarya RAI and Sushmita SEN

## THE QUEEN BEES

Because who cares what an 18-year-old with legs to the moon says when asked by an ageing society culture, "Honey, what would you do if you were prime minister?" so long as she can wing it to win. Because it felt great to have two gorgeous ladies stand in front of a billion people, keep their nerve, smile, and say the right thing at the right time. Because Indian womanhood is not about looking like the Goodyear blimp wrapped in six yards of fabric. Because in a country where women's souls are shackled, teens beaten up for wearing blue jeans and baby girls killed for being baby girls, Sushmita's Miss Universe and Aishwarya's Miss World titles in 1994 was a coming out parade of in-your-face confidence of such magnitude that men and women's libbers are still in denial. Because nobody cares whether "Ash" or "Sush" are fighting or fading—they made it, period. Because India now owns the beauty business, and it's a refreshing change from being the beast.

# M.F. HUSAIN

## MAVERICK MASTER



ASHESH SHAH



Because an artist is allowed a fetish or three. Because he is still the most exciting painter in India after fifty years of walking barefoot, at least twenty of painting nudes that offend and five of worshipping Madhuri Dixit. Because his works look like a mix between Picasso with an Ethiopian hangover, Jackson Pollock with two buckets less of paint and something that came out of a sketchpad during a sabbatical in a teashop, and yet is so distinctly, dynamically Husain that it either sets people to follow or sets them so far apart that they start a new thought process. Because besides being supremely talented he has a superb sense of marketing and timing, managing always to be in the news—painting Indira as Durga, painting Mother Teresa, painting Madhuri, painting ceilings, painting a horse. Because he raises a storm of debate about artistic licence, as he did with a semi-nude Saraswati that cultural Neanderthals damned. Because he saw the wisdom in genuinely apologising for hurt religious sentiments. Because iconoclasts become icons—and he is one, of the freedom of expression that an evolving culture must have.





# TWENTY-FIVE AND COUNTING



**PRABHU  
CHAWLA**

*The author is editor of  
INDIA TODAY.*

**I**T has been a tempestuous quarter century—for our country, for our magazine and for me personally. A formidable political dynasty reached its zenith and then fell; heroes turned into zeros; corruption became almost a prerequisite for public office; casteist chieftains became national power-brokers. It was a period that began with newspapers crawling before politicians. It ends with the once humble press riding on technology to metamorphose into a multimedia industry.

Look at INDIA TODAY itself. When I first walked into its offices in 1977 it had just four reporters. By 1990 there were 50 correspondents working all over the country. Today, the editorial strength is over 100; and that's for the English edition alone. If you consider the Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu editions, you can add another 50 journalists.

Numbers change but not the ethos. In 2000, as in 1975, India presents an avalanche of opportunities. When young people today talk about taking a risk with a career in IT (information technology), I look back at the big IT (INDIA TODAY) gamble in my life. I was cocooned in an academic atmosphere when the Emergency abolished my role of a teacher activist at Delhi University. My impulses were channelled into articles for various newspapers, for which I received princely sums of between Rs 75 and Rs 200. That was until I found an adventurous editor in Aroon Purie and his

highly innovative managing editor Chhotu Karadia.

Aroon was open to unconventional methods and to trying out those with little or no journalistic experience. So I began my part-time journalism career by writing my first INDIA TODAY cover story in February 1978: "Rising Crime in India". For the next three years, I spent more time at INDIA TODAY than teaching economics at my college.

I never found out if my students missed me but the magazine certainly opened up a whole new world for me. At 31, I flew for the first time on assignment to Kutch. The magazine was setting new norms for journalism. If there was a news event, an INDIA TODAY reporter would be there—no matter how far or how difficult or how expensive it may be. That the editorial team's average age was 26 made it all the more hungry.

I was soon on board fulltime. While four executive editors—Karadia, Suman Dubey, T.N. Ninan and Inderjit Badhwar—sportingly suffered my tantrums, it has been a different story dealing with four presidents, 10 prime ministers and 75-odd chief ministers in the dozen plus states I have reported from.

Of the 10 prime ministers, only three completed a full term and five survived for less than a year. Atal Bihari Vajpayee is, of course, still battling after 33 months in office. As top political jobs changed hands faster than editorships of big newspapers, journalism became both exhilarating

and challenging. In 1984, I flew from Srinagar to Delhi after covering Ghulam Mohammed Shah's swearing in ceremony, handed over my copy to a colleague at the airport—I had written my report on board—and took the next flight to Lucknow, where Narain Dutt Tiwari had just become chief minister.

Every journalist prides himself on his brushes with authority. I have had, I am happy to report, many. In the early 1980s, I broke a story on censorship of mail. It resulted in the then Delhi police commissioner P.S. Bhinder summoning me to his office for a sermon. I was also refused a Press Information Bureau accreditation and labelled an "undesirable element". Shortly afterwards, Giani Zail Singh, then the home minister, told Aroon, tongue firmly in cheek, that my investigative skills could be better employed in the CBI.

Years later, on October 31, 1984, I flew back from Sana'a, Yemen, with Zail Singh after we were informed of the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Obviously emotional, he confided that he was "morally bound" to choose Rajiv as the next prime minister even if the Congress opposed his candidature. "How can I forget their (the Gandhi family's) meharbani?" he told me.

Of the prime ministers I have covered, I found Rajiv and V.P. Singh the most transparent and forthcoming. Rajiv gradually became the captive of a coterie of mostly non-political friends.

After I broke a story on mail censorship, then home minister Zail Singh told Aroon Purie my skills could be better employed at the CBI.



He was at his charming best, however, in one-to-one interactions. It was after a full year's persuasion that I got him to agree to an interview, in June 1987. He invited me to join him on his visit to Goa and Gujarat.

I was determined to meet him alone in his cabin but Mani Shanker Aiyar—Rajiv's self-appointed minder—was equally determined to make his presence felt. When I told Rajiv I wanted to speak to him alone, he bluntly told Aiyar to leave. Half an hour later Aiyar was back. This time Rajiv was firm to the point of being curt and a red-faced Aiyar left in a huff. In the process Rajiv gave me his first ever interview on the Bofors controversy. Aiyar later, hit back by writing numerous articles against me in another magazine.

Those were heady days for the media. Politics was in ferment. There was intrigue in the air and, for us journalists, stories everywhere. My regular interaction with V.P. Singh led me to hint as early as 1985 that he could be a possible prime minister.

On April 8, 1987, I flew with him from Vizag to Delhi. During the two-hour journey, I realised he was planning to revolt. I was in a quandary. My deadline fell the following day but events were certain to overtake a premature story. Aroon saw my point and delayed the issue by two days. We had V.P. Singh on the cover barely 48 hours after he resigned as defence minister.

By now the relationship between Rajiv and Zail Singh had soured. When Ramaswamy Venkataraman took

over as president, the hostility between Rashtrapati Bhavan and Race Course Road ended but a certain uneasiness remained. Three months after he assumed office, I was invited by Venkataraman for tea. During our 45-minute meeting we discussed various subjects including his relationship with Rajiv.

A month later, I wrote a story on the brewing tension between the two. The day the magazine hit the stands, I received a midnight call from Rashtrapati Bhavan. My appointment with

**I have the reputation of being a martinet editor. Perhaps this is a throwback to my campus days, where discipline held the key to a teacher's success.**

Venkataraman, scheduled for the next day, had been cancelled. The President was not amused; it was an indirect tribute to the clout of INDIA TODAY.

The clout also came into evidence after Laloo Yadav arrested L.K. Advani to end his Rath Yatra in 1990. Advani was kept in the Massenjore Guest House at Dumka on the banks of the river Mayurakhshi. Following instructions from the then cabinet secretary Vinod Pandey, the Telephone Department laid a 35-km-long cable

between Dumka and the guest house so that I could interview Advani. It was another scoop for INDIA TODAY.

In 1991 I left INDIA TODAY to take over as executive editor of the (undivided) *Indian Express*. Much to the chagrin of 1,100 journalists spread over 17 editions, I tried to impose on them the rigorous journalistic standards that had been inculcated into me at INDIA TODAY. In 1994, I moved to *The Financial Express* as its editor-in-chief and CEO, only to return in 1996 to where I had begun: INDIA TODAY. Once again, Aroon rolled the dice. After hiring me as executive editor, he decided to convert the magazine into a weekly.

I realise I have the reputation of being a martinet editor. Perhaps this is a throwback to my days on the campus, when discipline held the key to a teacher's success. Perhaps inside me still lurks a crusty old don. At a less elevated level, journalism is a hard life—and certainly not about winning friends.

In 1997, before writing my story on the Jain Commission's findings, I met the then prime minister Inder Gujral, whom I had known for 20 years. He dismissed the report as being of no consequence. Days later he lost his job and I my social relationship with Gujral for the next two years.

Well, I still haven't told you about the enemies I've made in the past quarter century but that's another story, for another time. I have few enemies but fewer friends. Right now let's celebrate the silver jubilee.

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1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 26

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when I pick up the phone.

**Today:** I dress smartly, and smile.

when I pick up the phone

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# LANDMARKS

For 25 years, INDIA TODAY has chronicled India. It has recorded history in flight, not as it appears in hindsight. The story is vast and complex. But there are defining landmarks—events that either changed history or altered our collective self-image.

It began with Indira Gandhi's Emergency, a traumatic experience that taught India the virtues of democracy. It was followed by Operation Bluestar in 1984, a tragedy that outraged Sikhs but which underlined the importance of decisiveness in keeping the country together. But six years later politics provoked a horrible emotional balkanisation. Mandal and Ayodhya transformed politics and made citizens see each other in narrow, sectarian categories. The Pokhran blasts of 1998 provided a corrective. They catapulted India into the league of the world's greats.

Together, these landmarks have defined today's India.

Emergency



1  
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7  
5

Operation Bluestar



1  
9  
8  
4



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Mandal



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Ayodhya



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Pokhran II



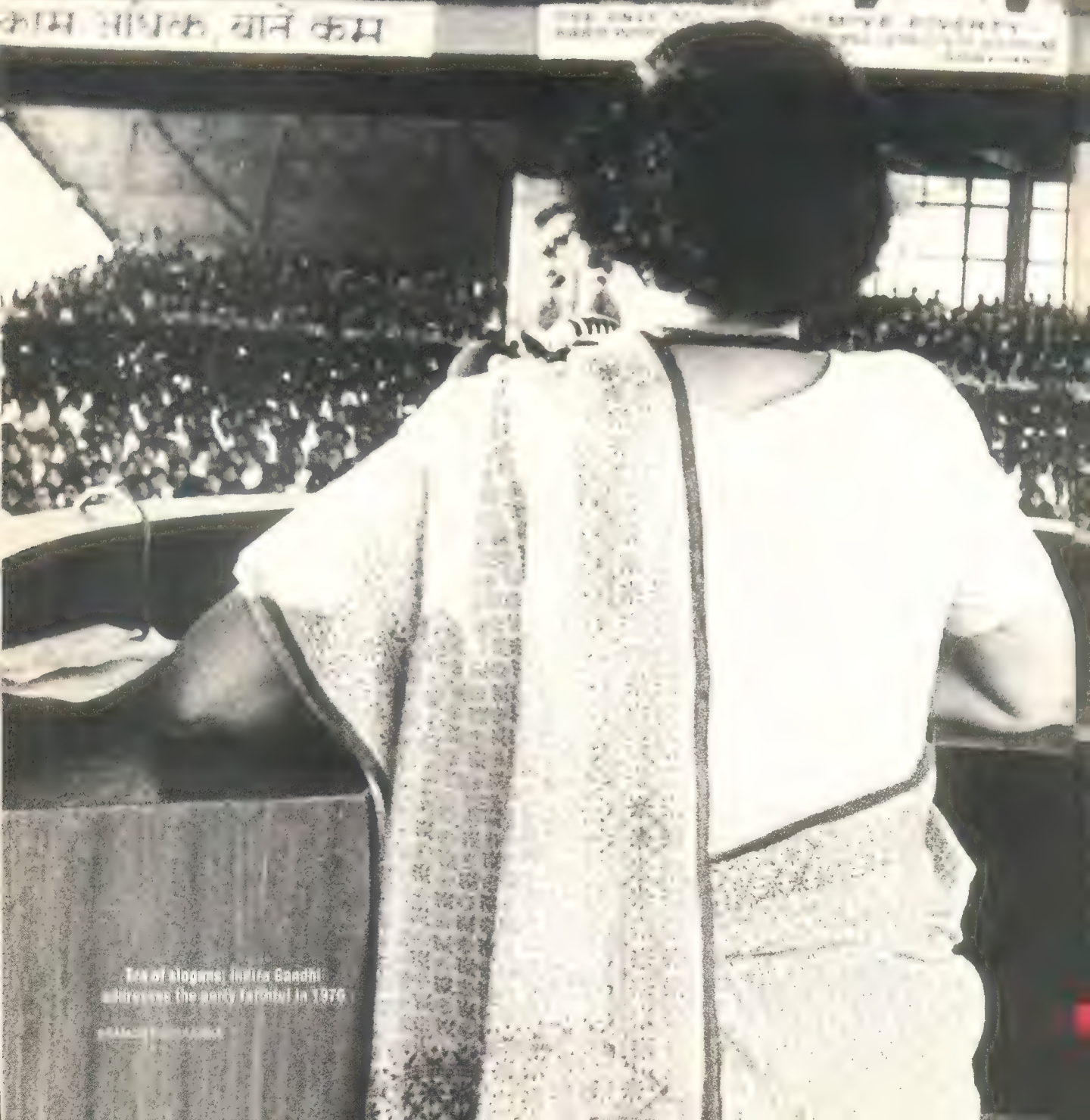
LANDMARKS

25  
YEARS

काम भाषक, याने कम

THE ONLY...  
BUREAU OF...

INDIA'S...  
......



Ten of slogans: Indira Gandhi  
addresses the party festival in 1974

PHOTOGRAPH BY...



1942

पूरी स्वतंत्रता का माग

20 नवी कार्यक्रम - प्रभारि की लय उरवा ह

नमय की प्रकार - अनु



# EMERGENCY

1975 - 1977



**"I come back more hopeful, more satisfied ... it even affects my writing."**

*Amrita Pritam, on meeting Indira Gandhi, December 16, 1976*

K.K. CHAWLA

ISSUE DATE **APRIL 1, 1977**

*Sanjay Gandhi was seated at the desk, back to the door, surrounded by piles of reports. He only looked up from his work to see the INDIA TODAY photographer and exclaim: "Out, out ... you there ... you get out. I can't concentrate." The photographer pointed out that a click of the camera couldn't disturb him. "No, it irritates me," said Sanjay as a final verdict. He didn't turn to indicate the interview was on. He continued to sign papers.*

**INDIA TODAY:** What made you stand for election?

**GANDHI:** No special reason.

**IT:** How much of your constituency have you covered?

**GANDHI:** 300 to 400 villages.

**IT:** What's the reaction?

**GANDHI:** Good.

**IT:** What do you offer your constituents?

**GANDHI** (signing papers): What I have offered before.

**IT:** What do you think the Opposition has to offer?

**GANDHI:** (still signing papers): Nothing.

**IT:** What cause does your opponent advocate?

**GANDHI:** Dacoity, mostly.

**IT:** In Rae Bareilly people are upset over sterilisations ...

**GANDHI** (looking up sharply): I have advocated family planning. But I have never stood for forcible sterilisations.

**IT:** There are people who have lost their salaries?

**GANDHI:** No, the only people who lost their salaries were those employed by the Family Planning Department to

get sterilisation cases. When they failed to get cases they lost their salaries.

**IT:** Would you change the Youth Congress?

**GANDHI:** Let's see.

**IT:** Would you change the Youth Congress leadership?

**GANDHI:** We'll see after Ambika Soni retires.

**MANEKA GANDHI:** Why don't you explain, Sanjay. He'll go and write that.

**GANDHI** (to Maneka): He's a journalist, he ought to know.

**IT:** Would you have time for Maruti if you are an MP?

**GANDHI:** It depends.

**IT:** On what?

**GANDHI:** On various things.

**IT:** Such as?

**GANDHI:** Various things.

—Sunil Sethi

Issue date **DECEMBER 31, 1976**

**I**n the aftermath of the prodigious publicity that has engulfed the charismatic Indira Gandhi in recent months, another dynamic woman has been making her presence felt on the Indian political scene—Ambika Soni.

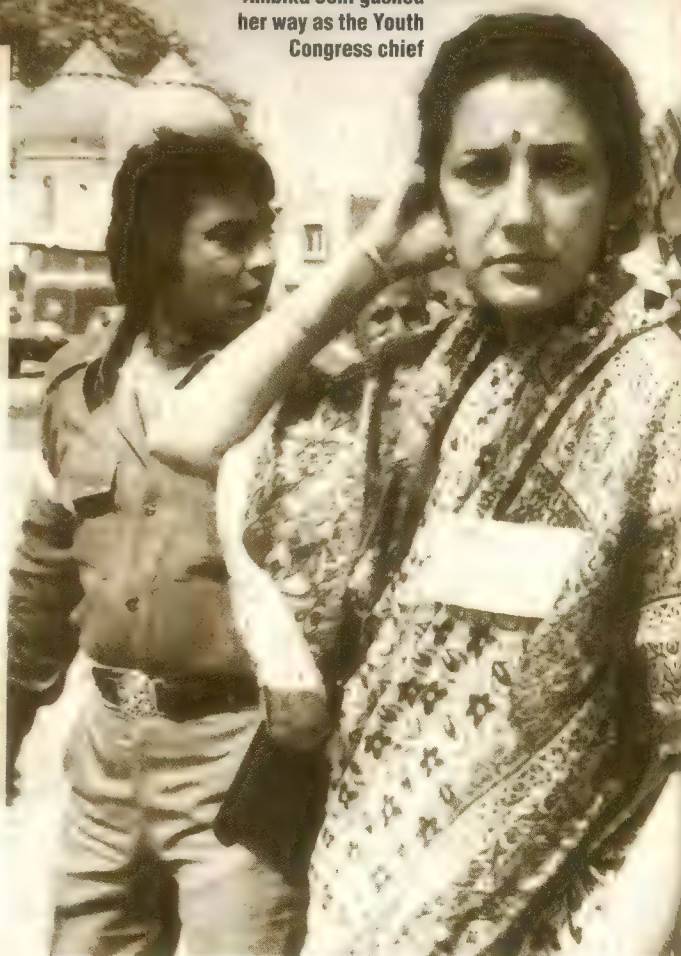
At 34, the attractive Mrs Soni is still politically young, but her election as president of the Indian Youth Congress seems to have infused her three million party members with a new strength of purpose. In the brief period of time since her elevation from general secretary of the Youth Congress to its presidency on November 13, Ambika Soni and her party have been figuring prominently in the news. The nomination of Sanjay Gandhi to the National Council of the Youth Congress was closely followed by a press conference at which Mrs Soni pledged her party's total support to the Prime Minister's Programmes, and also outlined a few of her own party's programmes. These included an ambitious campaign against casteism and the dowry system in the country, a drive against illiteracy in the rural areas and a programme for improving the efficiency of the various offices of the party.

In the last few days, posters displaying the smiling face of Soni have started appearing in the capital, and it seems fairly obvious that, as the more militant wing of the ruling party, the Youth Congress has been chosen to play a major role in implementing the present government's policies.

Having involved herself totally in politics, Ambika Soni does not intend to join her husband, who is shortly to be appointed an ambassador. "I don't intend to be a mere ambassador's wife and live abroad. I belong with the party. In five years from now, I see myself still with the party, and still in politics," she said.

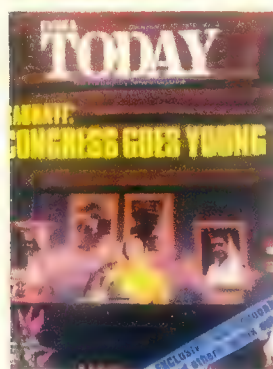
—Dilip Bobb

**Ambika Soni gushed her way as the Youth Congress chief**





# 25 YEARS



ISSUE DATE

**DECEMBER 31, 1975**

It was a day of jubilation. A crescendo of frenzied drum-beating and shouts of "Indira Gandhi *ki jar*" rose from the crowd gathered in front of her house that afternoon as the Supreme Court announced its verdict in the election case. Mrs Gandhi emerged smiling and acknowledged the greetings with folded hands. The crowd burst into wild cheers again as she began her brief speech. Congress leaders, chief ministers, MPs and PCC presidents who had gathered on the lawns of the AICC beamed in triumph. Many went up to the microphones and reeled off poems in praise of Mrs Gandhi. Congress president D.K. Barooah said, "It is a day of joy and happiness." Though visibly delighted, the prime minister's reaction was more subdued. "I am not a person who easily gets depressed or excited over a situation," she said, somewhat philosophically.

The next day, the Congress Parliamentary Party passed a resolution reaffirming "its unswerving support to the outstanding leadership of Indira Gandhi". The nation received the Supreme Court's judgement with a sigh of relief.

ISSUE DATE **OCTOBER 16, 1979**

In the middle-class homes of Delhi the watchword is hush ... Why, I ask an upwardly mobile young businessman formerly close to Sanjay Gandhi, does he support him with such fervour? The man muses for a while and then answers: "Do you know something? I can get anybody's house raided."

Raids, I learn, are supposed to be police swoops on the houses of the super-rich to unearth illegally stashed booty. But now, I discover, they are being used frequently against businessmen and professionals who

refuse to pay regular protection money to the authorities, or, as one victim of this pillage says, against individuals who refuse to make donations to the Youth Congress. And there's no one to complain to.

—Inderjit Badliwar



PANA-INDIA

Zail Singh (left) with Sanjay Gandhi in 1976

ISSUE DATE

**SEPTEMBER 16, 1976**

For the first time in the history of the Rajya Sabha, its sombre and solemn atmosphere was interrupted on August 10, the opening day of its monsoon session. While Chairman B.D. Jatti was making obituary references, a member rose in his seat and raised a point of order. As the chairman and others looked aghast, and somewhat questioning, at the delinquent member, he repeated. "Dr Subramaniam Swamy, on a point of order, Sir." Before the MPs could recover from their surprise, he was gone. He was immaculately dressed

as usual in white khadi kurta and dhoti. His hair was properly combed and oiled and his face had an after-bath freshness.

Dr Swamy had been evading arrest under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act since the proclamation of Emergency on June 26, 1975 by his mysterious journey to England. From there he went to the United States and some other countries where he carried on an allegedly vicious anti-India campaign. He returned to India as mysteriously as he had disappeared. The compelling reason for the return was to "save" his Rajya Sabha membership. Under the rules a member loses his seat automatically

ISSUE DATE

**MARCH 31, 1978**

As a sequel to the press censorship regulation already in force since the declaration of Emergency, the government has armed itself with further special powers to prevent publication of "objectionable matter" including reports dealing with parliamentary proceedings. Three ordinances were promulgated on December 8. The ordinance on press safety is merely a safeguard against "publications likely to excite disaffection against the constitutionally established government, incite interference with the production, supply or distribution of essential commodities or services, create disharmony amongst sections of society and indecent or obscene writings." The definition of objectionable matter also includes anything defamatory about the President, Vice-President, Prime Minister, Council of Ministers and Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

if he fails to attend its session for 60 days consecutively without obtaining leave of absence from the House.

The countrywide manhunt launched by the government was unsuccessful. The government was constrained to initiate proceedings against him for his alleged misconduct. A 10-member parliamentary committee was constituted to investigate the conduct and activities of Dr Swamy during the last year and more.

**RECALL**

Subhadra Joshi  
MP, on Sanjay  
Jan 1, 1978



That boy is delinquent, insane, a sadist and above all anti-Muslim.



ISSUE DATE

**DECEMBER 1, 1976**

**G**auhati had never seen anything like it. The capital of Assam was exploding with activity as the AICC and the Youth Congress together staged a spectacular get-together. It was the wish of every living Congressman to make his presence felt there.

The most significant event was the emergence of the Youth Congress as a force. Officially, it was accorded a status and granted a blessing. In the prime minister's words, the Youth Congress "had stolen the thunder out of us". "The fire of youth had been lit," said Youth Congress President Ambika Soni in a stirring address. Both Sanjay Gandhi and she were accorded a welcome as big as the PM and Congress President D.K. Barooah.

The roads were lined with banners and Sanjay and Ambika both appeared on luridly coloured calendars, doing the rows of deities and film stars.

—Sunil Sethi

ISSUE DATE **JANUARY 1, 1977**

**T**he bus was crowded. Two 10-year-old school-children were returning from a school in a lower middle-class area of west Delhi. "I have been sterilised," one told the other. The other proudly proclaimed that he had also taken the injections at school. A ripple went through the bus, whose passengers belonged to the gullible classes. "What happened?" a passenger asked

home from schools. "Children are being sterilised," said the whispers. And a vicious campaign by the right-wing RSS resulted in panic which was stemmed only by effective government investigation.

It began when the Delhi Municipal Corporation undertook its programme to immunise children in its primary schools against cholera, typhoid and tuberculosis. Doctors were doing

gering was well organised was apparent. The base of operations were in west Delhi and areas in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana which have been the traditional base of the Jan Sangh. In front of certain schools mobs collected and tried to attack the doctors. When the police arrived it was said it had been brought to "sterilize by force". Parents were "convinced" the injections were given on the third finger of the left hand for girls, and the second finger of the left hand for

**Circle of power: Sanjay Gandhi and Surinder Singh (Bansi Lal's son, on Sanjay's left) greeting Mrs Gandhi at Congress' Gauhati session**



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

**"As a private person I think we needed a lot of discipline."** Sonal Mansingh, dancer, December 16, 1976

the children. "We asked the doctor and he told us that we had been sterilised," one child asserted.

Within days attendance at the municipal corporation's primary schools fell to almost 10 to 20 per cent and the "sterilisation panic" spread to neighbouring Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Educated parents left their offices to drag their children

the rounds at every school. Investigations show it started with the two children who went for their normal shots. When they saw the doctor boiling the syringe they asked him what he was doing. The doctor told them it was being "sterilised". The children assumed they were being sterilised.

That the rumour-mon-

boys. "It is true," an educated parent asserted but then conceded he never stopped to verify the rumours. The conspiracy proved that the Jan Sangh during its five-year rule in the corporation had infiltrated the system by appointing its hard-core workers as teachers who were the prime instruments in spreading the scare.



**D.K. Barooah, sycophant-in-chief**

**RECALL**

**D.K. Barooah to Subhadra Joshi in 1976**



**You have no brains because you are a Punjabi.**

**Quoted to Shah Commission, Jan 1978**



ISSUE DATE **FEBRUARY 1, 1977**

BHUVAN SINGH

Indira Matan: Jayaprakash Narayan (right) with Jan Sangh leaders Advani and Vajpayee on June 24, 1975 in Delhi



**W**ith her uncanny instinct for the dramatic and the unexpected, Mrs Gandhi effectively knocked the wind out of the sails of her critics by a series of bold measures. In a historic, unscheduled 15-minute broadcast on

the night of January 18, she calmly announced the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and the relaxing of the 19-month-old Emergency and confounded those bemoaning the loss of democracy.

Mrs Gandhi's superb

sense of timing has left her holding most of the aces; a healthy economy, a disorganised, underfinanced Opposition, early polling dates and gains of the Emergency still fresh in the electorate's mind... It is evident Mrs Gandhi views the elections as the opportunity to secure for herself and the ruling party a mandate to pursue her party's policies. While her opponents are still recovering from their recent release from detention, the wheels of the vast Congress machinery have been set in motion. The Opposition has merely managed to launch a verbal assault against the "crimes" committed by the ruling party.

The businesslike manner in which Janata Party leader Morarji Desai has conducted negotiations so far has won admiration. It is, however the patriarchal Jayaprakash Narayan who will remain the lodestar for the new alliance. But considering that both are well past their prime, having been out of the public eye for long, their popularity is unlikely to gather any momentum.

ISSUE DATE

**FEBRUARY 1, 1979**

**S**anjay Gandhi's insistence on sterilisation at the cost of other family planning methods was almost a striking terror in the minds of the masses.

Though we have estimated that about 20 lakh persons were victims of the Sanjay Effect during the Emergency, the spread effect must have been undiminished the direct impact of this policy must have been on at least seven crore people (assuming five adult relatives and five adult friends of the victims) and another seven crore must have come under its indirect impact. Thus, Sanjay Gandhi must have alienated a potential 14.7 crore voters in the March 1977 elections.

—Ashish Bose, demographer

ISSUE DATE **JANUARY 1, 1978**

**T**o 1 Safdarjung Road trekked all officials, some out of fear, some out of sense of duty, but most out of desire to please Sanjay Gandhi and bend over backwards to carry out his every whim. From Number 1 went out streams of telephone calls to the bureaucrats ruling Delhi, carrying the most bizarre of orders—why are there cats and dogs on the road to his (Sanjay's) father-in-law's house, remove the cows that walk across his car, fire the zonal commissioner because rain water had collected outside Rukhsana Sultana's house,

demolish the structures irrespective of the fact that they are legal or there were court orders against the operation, arrest those who protest or resist. It was not important to the officials of the Delhi Development Authority, Delhi Municipal Committee and police who carried out these orders, that they were illegal and even cruel. "Such were the times that any protest would have meant instant arrest under MISA", was the defence of one and all.

Sanjay's orders were always oral. It was not to be put on file. What had irked

him was the support to the Jan Sangh extended by some traders and the Muslims who impeded his "beautify Delhi" plan. So the bulldozers were sent in. The Karol Bagh shops were razed because Sanjay had not received a "warm enough" reception when he had gone there. The shopkeepers who had gone to meet him were turned back with the words "you shall pay for supporting the Jan Sangh". The Jan Sangh areas were the first target for his demolition operations. Then came the Muslims' turn, as he wanted it to appear that "no special favour was being shown to the Muslims".



ISSUE DATE

**DECEMBER 10, 1976**

# INDIRANILAM

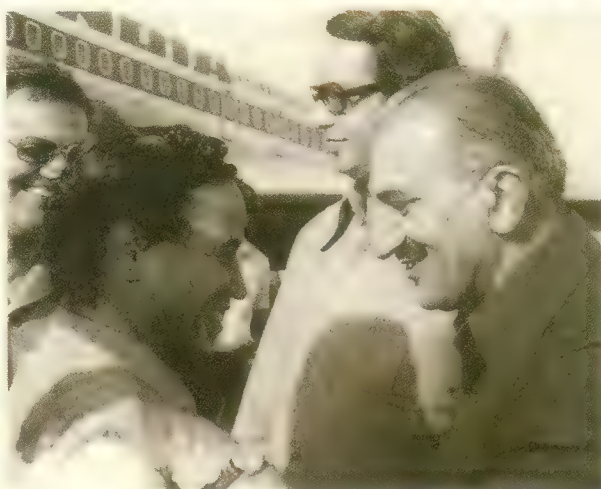
**ONE THING** What was the most significant event of 1976?

**Yunus** The most significant event, more than anything, the kind of behaviour, the kind of coming to, bringing down the entire moral in power and the unavailability of goods and services. Another significant event was the comparatively better sense of discipline which led to increased productivity. I would also consider the 12th amendment of the Constitution, a great



and event but surely, the most outstanding is the success achieved in the economic front. In this way, the role being played by the Government in the process of growth. **But** The Government had no power to make these achievements possible and they were able to do so without creating any imbalances or doing harm. Perhaps the primary reason for a need to address any imbalances in the increased production and control of inflationary tendencies.

—Mandira Tuli



**Silencers:** Yunus (right) with V. C. Shukla. They gagged the press.

**M**ohammad Yunus—Indira Gandhi's media manager during the emergency and an important member of the "kitchen cabinet" who controlled Samachar from behind the scenes personified the crudeness of style that was the trade mark of Mrs Gandhi's henchmen.

A former foreign service official and long-time sycophant of the Gandhi family, Yunus was also granted the

(referring to Jimmy Carter) wants to be President in America. What business have they got to tell us ... let it be a bullfighter or a fruit-wallah. We can't tell the American people.

## On democracy

After 200 years the Americans got democracy which they have finished. In my country, parliamentarism is there. In their country what has

happened? Nominated President? (referring to Gerald Ford). And nominated by whom? God Almighty? By one of the most dirty fellows (referring to Nixon) in American politics ... I don't think anybody can beat those trained by Goebbels in falsehood."

## On foreign press

The so-called free press has only served the interest of the haves against the have-nots... Even in western countries, there are news agencies, radio and TV which have official control of one kind or another. We know it. I don't want to give names ... This press can go to hell if this is the kind of news they print. Foreign correspondents gave wrong figures of arrests. The practice of putting out these figures is a kind of disease... We have put up with this nonsense for 30 years. We are going to hit back now ... You see the record. Absolutely 100 per cent fascist record, and they send their people to teach me credibility. —Mandira Purie

**"This press can go to hell if this is the kind of news they print."** Mohammad Yunus, PM's media manager

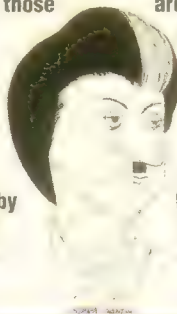
obscure title of "Prime Minister's Special Envoy". But as special envoy, Yunus was no Henry Kissinger. A crude, foul-mouthed braggart who adopted the role of a swaggering, whip-cracking lion tamer in the Emergency circus, Yunus proved himself a past master at how not to make friends and influence people. His choice remarks could not be reported earlier because of censorship. Some gems:

## On foreign governments

Nobody else has the right to come and say that your government is bad. We know that a fruit-wallah

ISSUE DATE | **NOVEMBER 16, 1977**

**I**ndia experienced a modern version of oriental despotism. There was a total disruption of the structure of loyalties. Ministers advised their subordinates to meet people like Sanjay who had no locus standi in the system. It became extremely convenient for Mrs Gandhi to bypass procedures in those areas in which a large measure of autonomy was absolutely necessary. Even a politically insignificant member of Mrs Gandhi's household, a meeting Boeing air-embarrassed by official meet-courage leave. But no one had the right to ask him to



—Devdutt



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# LANDMARKS

## 25 YEARS

“We went into the Golden Temple complex with humility in our hearts and prayers on our lips ... We took this decision not in anger but in sadness.”

*Lt-General K. Sundarji,  
Lt-General Ranjit Singh  
Dayal and Major-General  
R.K. Gaur*



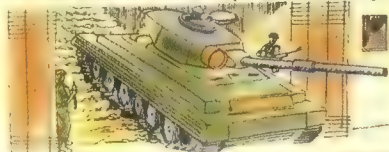
RAGHU RAI

# OPERATION

Tanks and howitzer placed on a nearby rooftop shell the Akal Takht



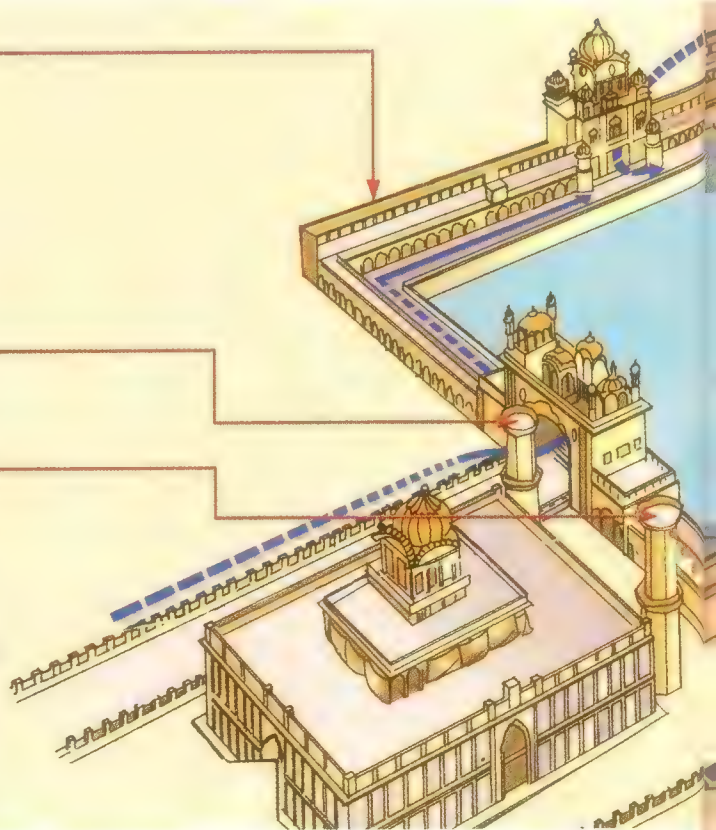
Tank has to break marble steps for the APC to go in



Ramgarhia Bungas blasted by tank shelling



Machine-gun fire from the piaos delays Madras advance



Recreated by YOGESH CHAUDHARY



For the first time in 400 years, the recital of gurbani was about to stop in the Golden Temple. As dusk fell on June 5, commandos dressed in jet-black dungarees slipped into the temple complex through the road between the serais and the Guru Ramdass langar building. They were able to bring back safely Akali Dal leaders like Harchand Singh Longowal and Gurcharan Singh Tohra along with their key aides. The darkened sky was lit with bright red tracers and massive columns of smoke billowed from the

langar building where heavy fighting took place. Foot-soldiers marching towards the Akal Takht ran into a heavy machine gun barrage from the Harmandir Sahib. Artillery pounded the Akal Takht and the heavily fortified pillboxes on top of the two 18th century towers and the langar building. During the day officers guided the fire from Chetak helicopters. In the evening on June 6 jawans charged the Akal Takht under the cover of armour and subdued the opposition after fierce hand-to-hand

fighting. Bhindranwale and his key associates, Amrik Singh and Shahbeg Singh, were found dead in the basement of the building. A squadron of tanks and armoured personnel carriers guarded the approaches to the temple, aiming their machine guns at the parapets. The last to fall was the Harmandir Sahib. On the evening of June 6, 22 terrorists led by AISSF General Secretary Harmandir Singh Sandhu came out with a white flag. The first phase of Operation Bluestar was over.

—Shekhar Gupta

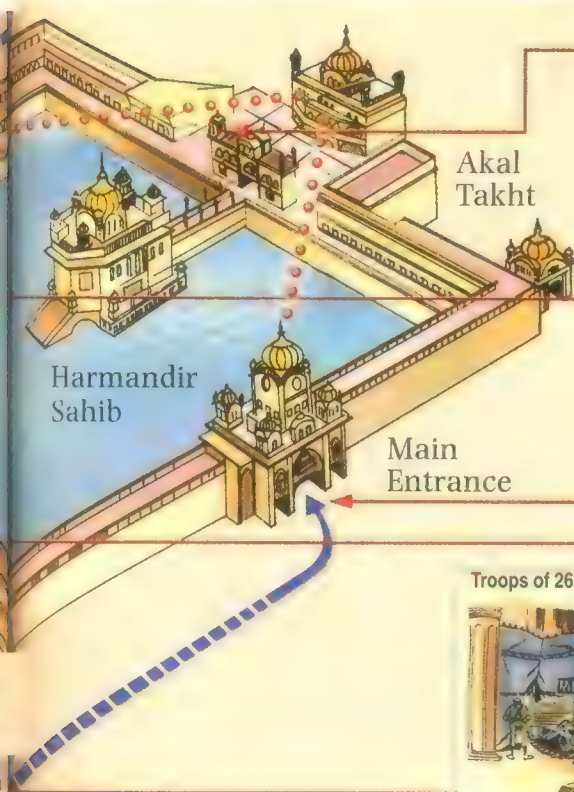
**THE TRIUMVIRATE:** (From left) Lt-General K. Sundarji, General A.S. Vaidya and Major-General K.S. Brar

PIB/DEFENCE



# BLUESTAR

**1984**



STF commandos fail to break in from the flanks



APC hit by rocket launcher



Troops of 10 guards storm the parikrama and turn into heavy fire



Troops of 26 Madras are held up as tank breaks steel gates for passage



Grazing fire from manholes at the foot of staircase



Why was it allowed to reach this point?





“Whenever the Golden Temple was destroyed, Sikhs got political power.”

*Harmindar Singh Sandhu,  
AISSF general secretary*

ISSUE DATE **AUGUST 15, 1984**

The infantry was facing its most daunting challenge from the machine-guns sited nine inches above the ground along the parikrama. The defenders correctly guessed that the troops would first neutralise the rows of rooms on the two floors of the parikrama. Recalls an officer: “Shahbeg had shown shrewd judgement in siting the machine guns ... to cover the area with grazing fire. He knew the regular Indian army drill where troops are taught to crawl and throw grenades.” Fortunately, the officers decided that the space in and around the parikrama was too narrow for the men to crawl around. They thus decided to hide behind the pillars and spring out occasionally to throw a grenade into a room. Ignoring the Akal Takht for the moment, Major-General K.S. Brar asked the infantry to first clear the first floor of

the parikrama in spite of the casualties. The approach at the two ends was effectively guarded by extremists hiding in manholes right next to the staircases. The troops were ordered to improvise assault ladders. Still trying to avoid a massacre, the commanders pressed the troops in a desperate bid to lob gas-grenades into the Akal Takht. The STF commandos were again asked to somehow reach close enough to the building and lob canisters containing “CS” gas. With the move failing and infantry pinned down by effective fire from the Akal Takht, the temple and parts of the parikrama, it was now time for frontal assaults. Volunteers from the Madras Regiment stormed the building. They were the first troops to have “contacted” the Akal Takht. Of the 10 volunteers, seven died in the narrow passage.

—Shekhar Gupta

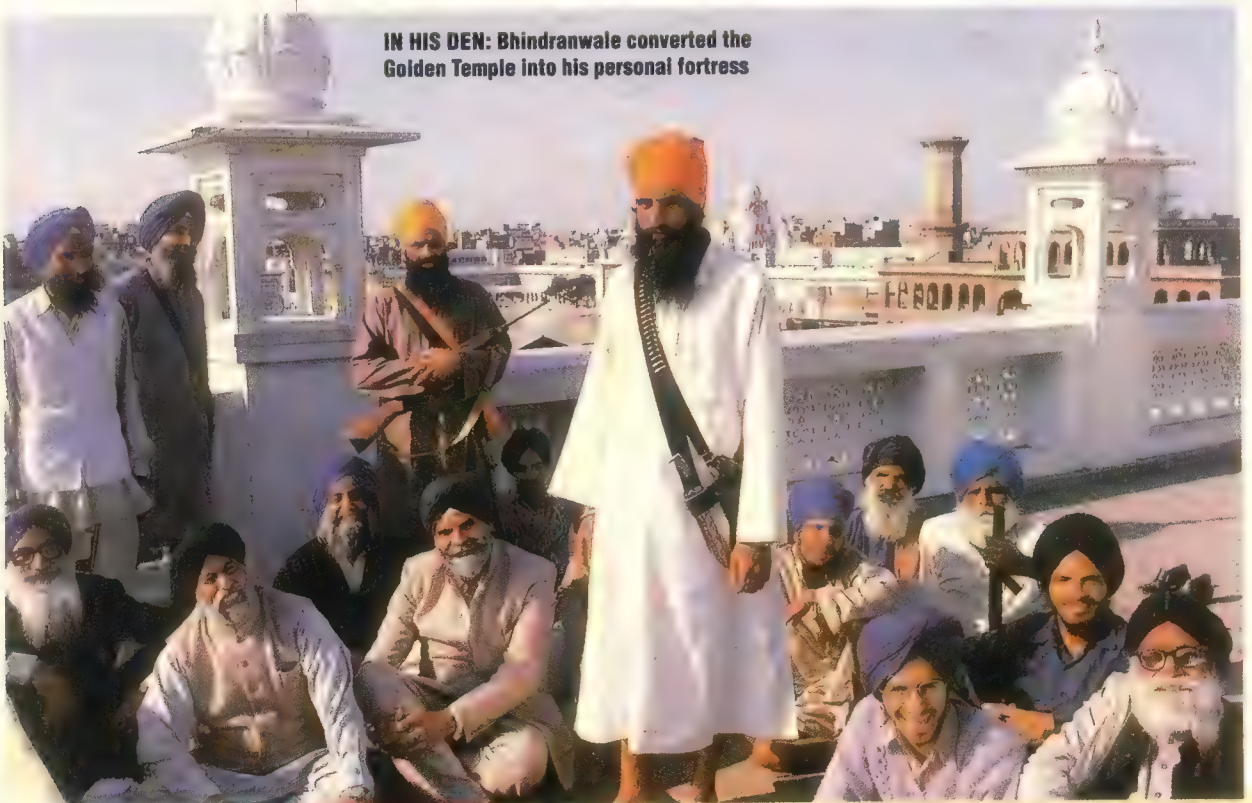
ISSUE DATE  
**OCTOBER 15, 1981**

It was the next evening that the building in Punjab has seen in recent times. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a Sikh religious leader, was transferred from a man hunted by the police to a house—held name. Warned in connection with last month's murder of Jaijit Narain, Bhindranwale finally gave himself up to the authorities at his headquarters in Mohalia, but only after prominent Sikhs had extolled him as a martyr to the Sikh cause and his 75,000 followers had given him a standing ovation. The price of martyrdom was heavy. A dozen people were killed, a dangerous law and order situation emerged, and the political confusion was total.

—Srinivas Khandekar

RAGHU RAI

**IN HIS DEN:** Bhindranwale converted the Golden Temple into his personal fortress





ISSUE DATE

**MAY 15, 1984**

**T**here is a rising cry for the government to invade the Golden Temple. "If I were the prime minister," says Charan Singh, "I would not have hesitated to send police to the Golden Temple. The Government is guided by imaginary fears." On paper, the logistics are promising. Extremists of various hues are divided and unlikely to offer organised defence to motivated commandos. It's true the approaches to the Golden Temple are being guarded by gunmen behind fortified battlements. They will all fight to the bitter end, giving Bhindranwale the confidence to assert: "The Sikhs will never participate in the raid and we're capable of taking care of the *tapiwal-*



**SHOT UP:** Akalis made noise, the gunmen called the shots

*lahs*". Adds AISSF General Secretary Harmindar Singh Sandhu: "We have enough arms, explosives, men and commitment to ward off even the Russian army." But brave utterances can't conceal that the extremists have been successful so far only against unarmed men and a demoralised police. Militarily, with some casualties, a raid on the temple is not impossible.

—Shekhar Gupta and Prabhu Chawla

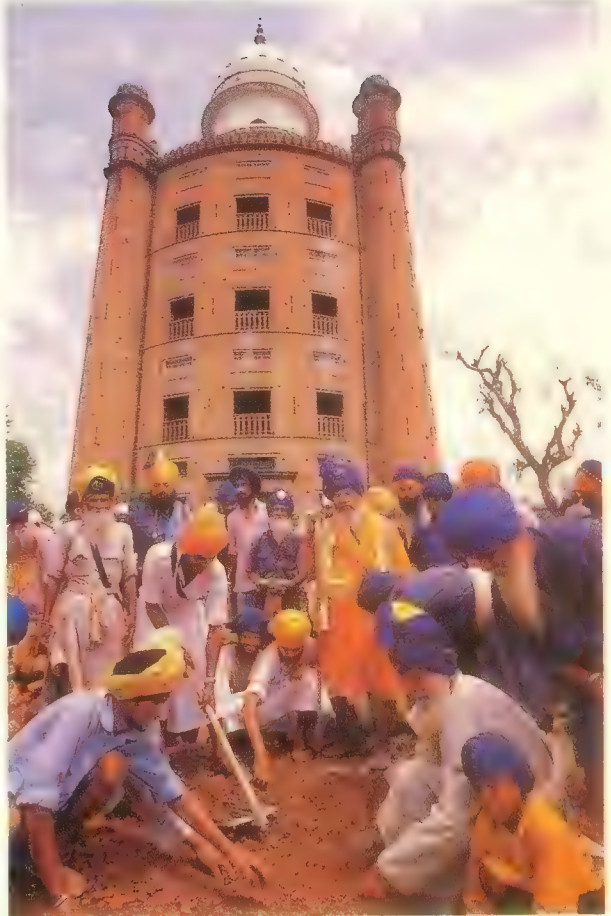
ISSUE DATE

**AUGUST 15, 1984**

**D**ressed in the colourful saffron and blue skirted dress of the Nihangs, Baba Santa Singh Chheyarvi Kirori (one with 96 crore followers) arrived at Amritsar's Gurdwara Burz Akali Phula Singh in a blaze of government-inspired publicity under the escort of police commandos and army jawans. "Here, look at my forces, we are a sect of martyrs," he declared, pointing to the hundreds of his followers dressed in ancient warrior costumes. Within hours of his arrival, the gurdwara resembled a Nihang *chhawani* (cantonment). While some of his followers set up community kitchens, others stacked the arms they had arrived with. Meanwhile, the Baba's personal staff washed his scarred feet or trailed behind him with a room cooler on a long electric cord, an essential part of his baggage.

But behind the surface comedy lay the grim reality that Santa Singh and his fellow Nihangs represented the storm-troopers of the Government's new offensive aimed at destroying the remnants of the Akali Dal leadership and also its desperate search for a solu-

BHAWAN SINGH



**LABOURING IN VAIN:** Nihang leader Baba Santa Singh's kar seva to reconstruct the Akal Takht outraged Sikh sentiments further

tion to the Punjab problem. But ... there are people in Punjab who still believe Bhindranwale is alive. Many believe he escaped using a tunnel and will reappear at an opportune time. Said a

senior army officer displaying a set of pictures of Bhindranwale's body to INDIA TODAY: "Such fables spread every time a controversial figure dies."

—Shekhar Gupta

**"Why didn't they approach me for help? I'd have sent in my cavalry."** Santa Singh, *Nihang Baba*

ISSUE DATE

**JUNE 30, 1984**

**I**t began at Sriganganagar, a border town in Rajasthan where over 400 jawans of 9 Sikh Light Infantry rebelled. This was followed by the mutiny at Ramgarh near Ranchi in Bihar where, charged by



rumours that women were being raped by the army in Punjab, 1,438 recruits revolted, killing Brigadier R.C. Puri, the commandant, and escaped with weapons. They surrendered after bloody gun battles in five places. Similar desertions took place in Pune, Thane, Jammu, Siliguri, Silchar and Alwar.

—Shekhar Gupta

**RECALL**

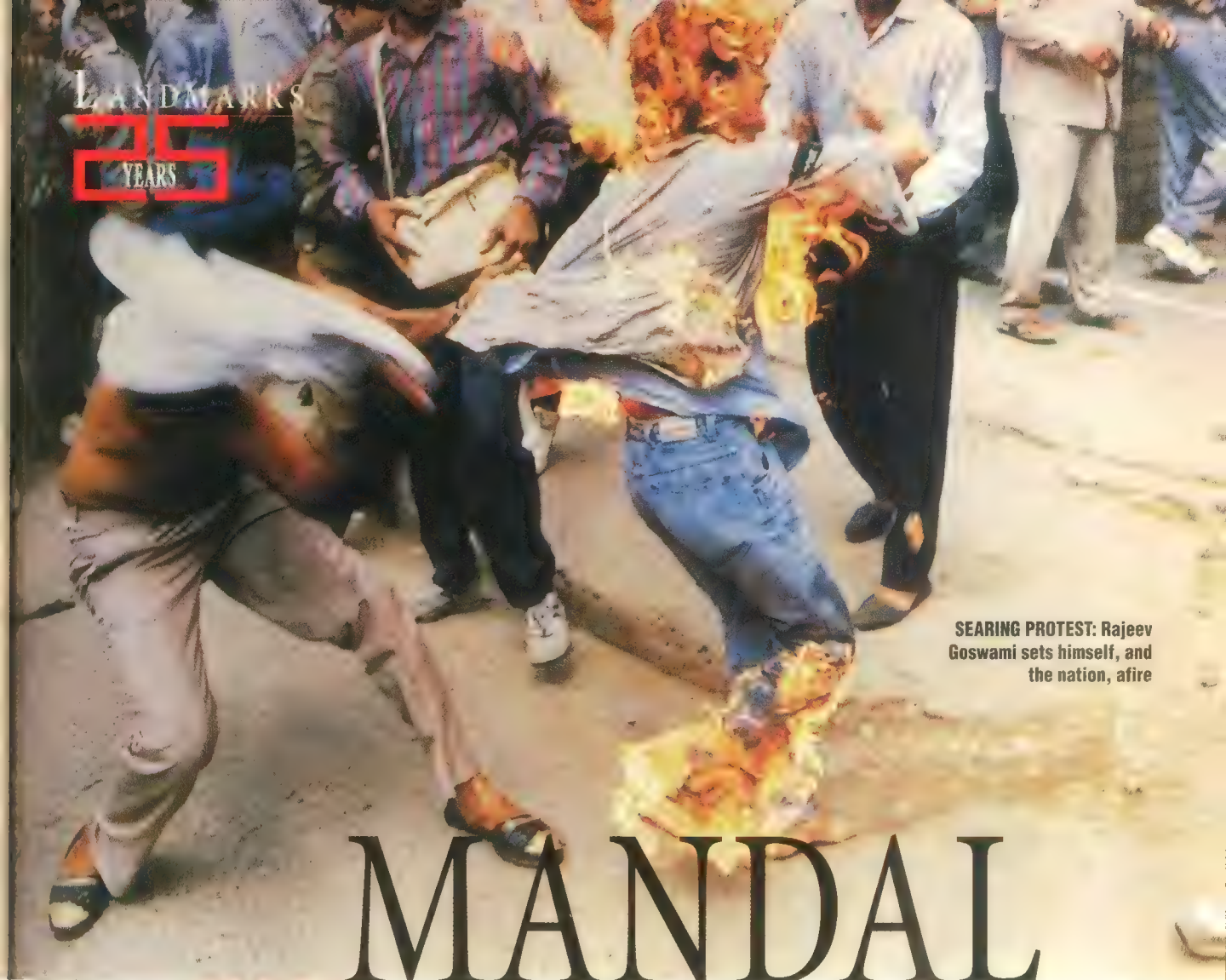
Rajiv Gandhi.  
March 1984

“The police have entered gurdwaras before ... Why can't they do it now?”



LANDMARKS

25 YEARS



**SEARING PROTEST:** Rajeev Goswami sets himself, and the nation, afire

# MANDAL

1990

AFF

ISSUE DATE **SEPTEMBER 15, 1990**

“Instead of studying for MAs it is better for the youth to study the suffering of the poor.”

V.P. Singh, October 1990

It was a decision that will live forever in infamy and become the benchmark of the descent of Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh from leader to demagogue. His announcement on August 7—two days before Devi Lal’s Kisan Rally in New Delhi—that the government would implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, was initially greeted as a master-stroke calculated to consolidate the backward castes as the new vote bank of the badly mauled Janata Dal. Soon after Devi Lal was bounced from the Cabinet, he was replaced in the Cabinet Committee on

Political Affairs (CCPA) by Sharad Yadav, a claimant to the national backward caste leadership. On August 6, when Yadav attended the first CCPA meeting, he joined the prime minister in suggesting that the Mandal report be implemented immediately. Its backers even went to the extent of openly citing its advantage in creating a “vote bank”. Some members suggested that Singh discuss the matter with the BJP and the Left. Singh agreed. But after a fashion. He called L.K. Advani and Harkishan Singh Surjeet and simply informed them. It was a *fait accompli*. The announcement followed on August 7.

And all hell broke loose. The real hope is that the voters will eventually reject Singh’s brand of gimmickry as well—that they will refuse to be used as cannon fodder for a politician making a pitch for them through divisions based on primeval hatreds. Perhaps they will answer V.P. Singh by letting him know that when they elected him they elected him as a national leader capable of uniting the nation and carrying it forward, and not as a leader of urban or rural or socially sectarian interests hell-bent on dividing the people and leading them into the infernal divisions of the past.

—Inderjit Badhwar

**RECALL**

S. Dongre, OBC student, on Mandal report. October 31, 1990



I did not want to have the prop of my caste to achieve something in life.



"Even if heaven and earth clash, there will be no compromise on the implementation of the Mandal report."

Laloo Prasad Yadav, 1990

"If state patronage for preferred treatment accepts caste as the only insignia for determining backwardness, the danger is that it would perpetuate the system."

The Supreme Court, 1990



ISSUE DATE  
**DECEMBER 15, 1990**

Vandalism is nothing new in India. Except, this time, the victim is language and the vandals are politicians. With the advent of Laloo Prasad Yadav as chief minister a new political lexicon is emerging. Yadav has simplified executive orders by the street-fighter's expression of "ask for drink kar denge (we'll give you this everyone)". And his response to the anti-Mandal protesters was "Dekhite hai ki koi bhi chikni chikni hai (Let's see the beauty and more skin in the region)".

—Farooq Ahmed

ISSUE DATE

**SEPTEMBER 15, 1990**

By focusing attention on government job reservations, Singh may have created a fatal disincentive to the youths of the backward classes. Their representation in the technical fields like science and technology services is just 16 per cent. But they have 21 per cent representation in revenue services and 19 per cent in policing agencies of the Home Ministry. Now the mass of the backward class youth too will look up to file-pushing jobs, ignoring other sectors. And finally, these youth will end up in government departments where already the other preferred classes—SCs and STs—are mockingly addressed as



IF YOU WERE DEAD: Protesters take out Singh's "funeral procession"

"Sugar Charlie/Tango" (SC/T) by their peers who scoff at their relative incompetence. An apartheid, Indian style, will exist in government offices where two parallel universes will exist uncomfortably. And even promotions will be according to reserved quotas—carried forward into successive years if the quotas

are not filled—unavailable to qualified candidates who are not the "right caste". Hostilities will be natural. And the impact of these hostilities will divide the entire workforce in the organised public sector from top to bottom. A dreadful prospect for governance.

—Inderjit Badhwar

"Five hundred years hence, people will worship V.P. Singh and me." Ram Vilas Paswan

ISSUE DATE

**SEPTEMBER 30, 1990**

Even if V.P. Singh, Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav are to be condemned for stoking the fires of sectarian hatred, they can't be accused of speaking from both sides of their mouths. Right or wrong, you know where they stand. But what about their other colleagues? What about the stalwarts of the BJP and Congress(I)? In private,

senior members of the Janata Dal and other parties say, oh, it's a terrible thing Singh has done and even secretly wish success to the anti-reservation stir. But in public they skirt the real issues. This is a wretched display of cynicism. There are times when the country needs disinterested leadership instead of partisan gamesmanship. —Editorial



VOTE YOUR CASTE:  
V.P. Singh campaigning

NAMAS BHOJANI

ISSUE DATE

**OCTOBER 31, 1990**

On a Sunday morning, Monica Chadha, 19, slipped out of the one-room apartment in south Delhi where she was watching a video with her mother and five sisters, went to the terrace and set herself ablaze. An hour before setting herself on fire the Class XII student had spoken of her wish to do so. And her mother had said: "Go to V.P. Singh's house and tell him what you feel. Death is not the answer." Battling for life with 90 per cent burns, she still exhorted her aunt: "Aap bhi bolo na, V.P. Singh hai hai." Monica was not even planning to do a job.



# LANDMARKS

# 25 YEARS

**"The responsibility for my death lies with those who consider reservation a vote bank."**

*Suicide note of  
S.S. Chauhan, 22, of Delhi*

ISSUE DATE

**OCTOBER 31, 1990**

**W**hen he set himself ablaze to protest against the implementation of the Mandal Commission report, little did Rajeev Goswami realise that his act would put to torch the north of India. No matter. What is almost as important as putting an end to the spate of self-immolations is the answer to one question: Why did these youngsters protest in so incendiary a fashion? When the answers come, they will come in a swarm. Meanwhile, psychoanalysts and social scientists are putting forward explanations that are still nebulous because of a lack of time and material to study.



**MANDAL PYRE:** Vinod Ahuja, who immolated himself

SHARAD SAXENA

ISSUE DATE **APRIL 15, 1991**

**F**or V.P. Singh, this is the time to reap the Mandal harvest. For him, the May election will be a referendum on reservations. No other issue in the country's recent history has polarised society so completely. Despite his condemnation by the urban middle class, Singh has stuck to the position that he would implement the report. He saw in it a deadly instrument to barter all traditional vote banks and social equations.

In a shrewd move, he widened his base further by incorporating women into the Mandal bracket. He has promised 5 per cent reservation even for the poor among the upper castes. If Mandal works the way it was designed to, there is no stopping Singh—the reservation bracket straddles 60 per cent of the electorate. He has sought to give reservations a new dimension by raising the slogan of "social justice".

—Bhaskar Roy

PRASHANT PANJIAR

**Students march in protest**



ISSUE DATE **FEBRUARY 28, 1990**

**I**n town after dusty town across north India, a new graffiti can be seen on the walls. No fancy lettering. No artistic pictures. Just one hastily scribbled word: *Aa-ra-ksh-an* (reservation). And crossing it out, two diagonal slash marks. The medium is crude. But the message it conveys is unambiguous: down with reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. With that slogan on their lips, and backed by brickbats in their hands, anti-reservation agitationists went on a rampage through December and

January. It began in a small way in Allahabad but then spread rapidly like a bush-fire to the rest of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Bihar—175 districts in all. Even girls and schoolchildren took to the streets. In most of the affected areas, the government or local authorities simply shut down educational institutions. Officials in the Union Home Ministry even coined a term for it: "Educational paralysis". Estimates of total damage were not available, but Home

Ministry sources put the number of dead at a dozen. Unfortunately, successive governments have chosen to ignore the rural backward castes—the silent majority—opting instead to appease their more vocal urban brethren. That may be electorally expedient. But inevitably the result has been bitter riots and agitations in which the backward castes are often the worst sufferers. The Government would therefore do well to tread softly on the reservation question.

—Pankaj Pachauri and  
Philip George

ISSUE DATE

**MARCH 15, 1991**

**V**.P. Singh is enjoying a bit of a high. Unfettered, relaxed and confident, the former prime minister now positively chuckles with suppressed excitement. Much the same way as he had sprung Mandal, Singh announced in a cheering 10,000-strong party convention at Patna that 5 per cent of party positions would henceforth be reserved for the weaker sections and minorities. Singh announced his personality was least interested in zero position, offered to resign all posts, gave the task of sorting out details in a committee, and left the meeting to spread the message of equality to the people as a "single stick of the party". The result is an unopposed leadership, an unstructured, undisciplined party floundering to reorganise itself and Singh looking content, his own as a warrior for social justice intact.

—Bhaskar Roy

**RECALL**

Psychologist Sudhir  
Kakkar on protests.  
October 31, 1990

The children reacted to V.P. Singh  
as to an unjust father. 55





making the sky the best place on earth

**new generation**  
**airways**

L'Espace Attitude  
You can come from far away and arrive freely

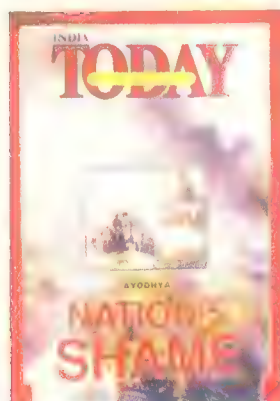


ISSUE DATE

JANUARY 15, 1993

**P**ost-Ayodhya, in most villages, you are either a Hindu or a Muslim. There seems to be no third category. The BJP's promise of a Hindu Rashtra has burgeoned from just a vote catching device to almost a dharma. L.K. Advani is now Advaniji and is spoken of with reverence. Sanjalpur, a Thakur-dominated village of 12,000, is evocative of the mood. Outside the temple 75-year-old Bhagatji is holding forth. He actively worked for the Congress all these years but has now shifted loyalties. "Why doesn't Rao arrest those who are trying to divide the country on caste lines?" he asks. "Instead he has put the representatives of Ram in jail." Babu Lal, a young farmer, says, "We are ecstatic and are now waiting for the day when *darshan* will start. Truckloads of us are waiting to go." Hari Swarup, who has been busy reading *Dainik Jagran* draws the crowd's attention to a report: "*Dekho*, 600 temples have been destroyed and no one is talking about them. One masjid comes down and leaders are thrown into jail."

—Harinder Baweja



# AYODHYA

ISSUE DATE

DECEMBER 31, 1992

**W**e have come to die for Shri Ram," a young kar sewak had told me the day before. On his pubescent chest was branded *Jai Sri Ram*, burned with cigarette ends. "TIGER. JAI SRI RAM," read another. "I am Ram's tiger," he said exultantly. "I have come here to destroy the masjid. And if I am fired upon by the police, my corpse too will bear the name of Ram."

There were also skinheads of Ram, whose skulls were shaved except for the name of Ram designed with hair. Among the saffron-banded crowds, effigies of Narasimha Rao and V.P. Singh made Ravanic guest appearances. It was a medieval mela with a hint of unconscious farce: sanyasis on bicycles, sadhus in saffron gear and tridents, wearing Action shoes.

"The miracle of Ayodhya is the crowds," said Swami Mandharam Das. "It is God's *leela*. The temple is just a medium, the end is Ram Rajya." Tall and wide in his saffron robes, the swami had silver on his beard, and careful eyes used to command. But his voice was firm and quiet. He stood loose and easy among the bustle of one of the mass kitchens, where rice was being shovelled and spread on bamboo mats, and dal poured from cauldrons with buckets.

As the first dome of the Babri Masjid fell, conches blew and trumpets blared. And the cries of "*Jai Siya Ram*" were on thousands of throats. Swamis stood on the branches of trees like Vikramaditic apparitions. A



3.30 p.m.



Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR



lone crusader atop the first gumbad to collapse waved a saffron pennant at the sky only to become an epitaph of dust seconds later. Sentry boxes were upturned and smashed, barbed wire fences torn down. "It is Hanuman's *gada* (mace) at work, pro-

claimed Vinay Katiyar of the Bajrang Dal. As the central dome of Babar's monument fell, the saffron dust of four centuries settling into the turbulence of another time, a swami in a white beard pointed at a saffron sun: "The sun sets on Babar at

last! The taint has been removed forever!" As the debris of 460 years of history was being evacuated by the saffron hordes, the landscape of Ayodhya changed forever. And with it the landscape of India.

—Ravi Shankar  
D RAVINDER REDDY

**UP IN ARMS:** Kar sewaks at the site of the disputed shrine

## VOICES

"It is the most blissful day of my life, I keep pinching myself to see if I am awake."

*Uma Bharati, BJP MP, 1992*

"The best thing for Narasimha Rao to do is to join the BJP. Informally he has been in it."

*V.P. Singh, former prime minister, 1993*

"The mosque is a sign of slavery. An independent India won't accept it."

*Murli Manohar Joshi, BJP president, 1992*

"What Mohammed Ghori and Genghis Khan failed to do the BJP has done to India. They have destroyed 1,000 years of heritage."

*Chandra Shekhar, former prime minister, 1993*

4.49 p.m.

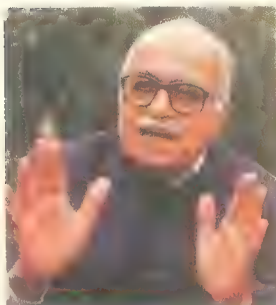


Demolition of the Ayodhya structure was an act of utter perfidy.



## LEADERS who made it happen

BHAVAN SINGH



**L.K. ADVANI:** Used Ayodhya to create a Hindu vote bank

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



**AVADYANATH (left), UMA BHARATI:** VHP's politicians



**RITHAMBARA:** Demagogue who chanted *ek dhakka aur do*

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



**ASHOK SINGHAL (centre):** Sangh Parivar mastermind

ISSUE DATE **DECEMBER 31, 1992**

The scenes will return. Like deranged ghosts, to haunt those who were at the graveside to witness the burial of a secular dream. The screams of exultation with every blow of the pickaxe, each thrust of a rod, each dome that came crashing down. If there were no implements, the frenzied hordes would have used their hands to the same effect, so powerful was the poison that coursed through their veins in those few hours of madness. There were others. The maniacal look in the eyes of the kar sewaks as they triumphantly held aloft Babar's bricks or attacked journalists and taunted the bovine policemen. The provocative exhortations

over the loudspeakers that rose above the roar of the crowds. And the twin plumes that snaked to the skies: the dust from the demolished structure, and smoke from nearby Muslim houses torched in the orgasmic fever. Religion was their opium and it returned Ayodhya to the medieval ages. But quite a few warning signs had been there earlier, as the initial trickle of kar sewaks swelled over the past three days into close to two lakh. Many were docile sadhus, pot-bellied shopkeepers from Delhi, rustics from Punjab, excited students from Pune. There were,

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



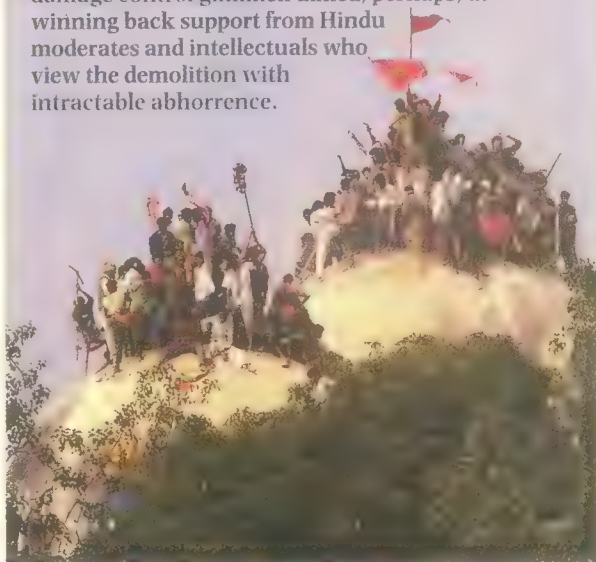
**HEY RAM:** Women played a major part in the movement

however, others, their number running into hundreds, who came with one fanatical obsession—the destruction of the Babri Masjid.

—Dilip Awasthi

ISSUE DATE **DECEMBER 31, 1992**

A tal Bihari Vajpayee, senior BJP leader, may today well describe his party's Ayodhya adventure as "its worst miscalculation", a "misadventure" and wax poetically on the existential dilemma of "what should we do? Where are we headed?" Perhaps a year ago these penitent outpourings would have carried a degree of credibility and reinforced Vajpayee's image as the party's resident moderate philosopher. But now, with the party stripped naked and all its real intentions revealed, Vajpayee's sack-cloth and ashes routine smacks of yet another public relations damage control gimmick aimed, perhaps, at winning back support from Hindu moderates and intellectuals who view the demolition with intractable abhorrence.



ISSUE DATE

**JANUARY 15, 1993**

Like a cornered feline. With no option but to attack, the Government has made a bold and desperate leap at its tormentors. Its decision to acquire all the land around the Ayodhya shrine and to construct both a mosque and a temple at the same site came after every soft alternative had been snatched from it. Another storm, bigger and darker than the one that broke after the demolition, was almost upon the nation. The Muslim hardliners are up in arms against the decision to allow the *darshan* of the idols installed at the site even while the government talks of consulting the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution on whether or not a temple once existed on the site. The more rabid among them are bent on leading young Muslims to offer namaz where fervent Hindus are thronging to worship Ram. Such a confrontation could be disastrous.

—Rahul Pathak



# LANDMARKS

## 25 YEARS

ISSUE DATE

**FEBRUARY 15, 1993**

**W**hen former CPI(M) MP Subhasini Ali stepped into a congested Muslim ghetto in Kanpur, she was mobbed by a crowd screaming out stories of police repression and venting their anger. She tried to soothe them by saying violence was not the answer. The crowd, shaken by a week of post-Ayodhya violence, was not looking for words. It was looking for security. "If we are going to die anyway, then we might as well die fighting our attackers," said



an angry housewife. "Enough is enough," says Khurshid Alam Siddiqui. "Since Independence our loyalty has been suspected and we silently bore the brunt of communal violence. But the situation has become intolerable now."

—Ramesh Menon and Javed M. Ansari

"The Centre has failed. Muslims are angry. India is headed for civil war."

Abdullah Bukhari, 1992

BHAWAN SINGH



ISSUE DATE **NOVEMBER 30, 1989**

**I**t was an unusual victory celebration. As thousands streamed into the sanctum sanctorum of the curiously shaped shrine, their heads bowed in reverence and eyes glazed by extreme religious fervour, the slogans they shouted were not just to extol the gods.

"Yeh to kewal jhanki hai, Kashi, Mathura baaki hai (This is just the beginning, we still have to sort out Kashi and Mathura)." And "Tel laga ke Dabur ka, naam mita do Babar ka (Rub Dabur oil, wipe out Babar's

**KITSCH: TV serial *Ramayana* was used to fan passions**



BHAWAN SINGH

name)." A poor attempt at versification, but it reflected the mood on the morning of November 9 at the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid shrine in Ayodhya. Even though the authorities attempted to persuade the Vishwa Hindu Parishad activists to lay the foundation stone 250 ft away from the shrine's entrance, they were ultimately allowed to lay it where they wanted to in the first place: in front of the main entrance, just 170 ft away. The Government said the stone had been laid on land declared undisputed by the Allahabad High Court. The Muslims said it was within the disputed area and the Hindu fundamentalists said they couldn't care less. Worried by the rising resentment among devout Hindus, the Government had capitulated totally. Yet with the BJP claiming victory, it was doubtful if the move would win any Hindu votes for the Congress(I). At the same time, it had alienated the Muslims. —Shekhar Gupta

SAIBAL DAS



**ALL FOR RAM: In 1989, some two lakh bricks reached the site**

ISSUE DATE

**DECEMBER 31, 1982**

**T**here were moments in history when a nation's soul is spent. For India, that moment came on the afternoon of December 6, 1982, when the nation's soul was spent. India has always prided itself as the largest democracy and a secular state in the world. Today, that has been put in doubt. And that is the real shame. It is a shame because the largest opposition party through nothing of reducing this country to a democracy by conspiring its followers to take the law into their own hands. It is a shame that a party which claimed its legitimacy from the ballot box should so blatantly violate basic democratic tenets to achieve its objectives. It is a shame that the Government did not have the courage to enforce the law of the land.

—Anand Parib, Lawyer, Ramesh Menon & Co.

**RECALL**

Laloo Yadav, chief minister, Bihar, 1993

Once I gave a sound thrashing to Advani. I still have to give him more.



# LANDMARKS

# 25 YEARS

“Let them try and enter Ayodhya. We’ll teach them what the law means.”

Mulayam Singh Yadav,  
UP chief minister, 1990



NINAN

ISSUE DATE

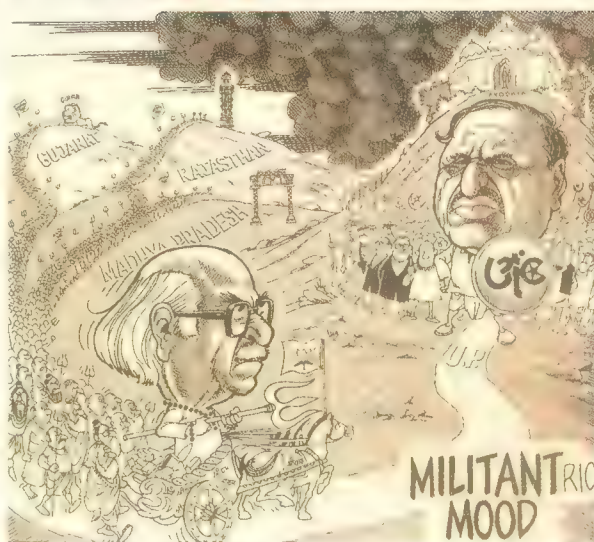
**FEBRUARY 15, 1993**

**D**ecember has been a cruel month, mixing religion with politics, dividing people into those for or against Hindutva—and sadly, for or against Muslims. Earlier, the term “Scuppie”—saffron-clad Yuppie—was a joke, used to describe the Yuppie’s flirtation with neo-fundamentalism after Advani’s rath yatra. The kind with Jai Shri Ram stickers on their Marutis. But post-Ayodhya—yes, we seem to have divided time into Before Ayodhya and After Ayodhya—this growing new breed is no laughing matter. There has been a hardening in their stance. They have turned far more vociferous, more intolerant. Their vocabulary is not much different from Bal Thackeray or Ashok Singhal.

—Madhu Jain

ISSUE DATE **DECEMBER 15, 1990**

**T**here is one telling incident which shows how Faizabad has changed from being a vaguely Left-oriented town not particularly bothered by its proximity to Ayodhya, into a rage of saffron, breathing defiance at Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. L.K. Advani’s renewed rath yatra on November 19 covered the 7 km between Faizabad and Ayodhya in four crawling hours, having to wedge its way through a turbulent sea of humanity. The preparations for the renewed thrust towards the disputed site, due on December 6, by the kar sewaks, were in evidence. On the day of Advani’s visit, local people organised tea-stalls and distributed batashas (sugar dollops) to those who had come to see him. Says Avadhesh Singh, a local businessman: “This time, the karsewaks will not



Cartoon by NINAN; Issue date October 15, 1990

have to starve ... the local people ... will queue up to feed them.” The violence that Ayodhya witnessed on October 30 and November 2 will remain etched in their memories for years. Thousands of fence-sitting resi-

dents of the town couldn’t digest the slaughter and joined the Hindu revivalists. It is clear the movement is now a militant juggernaut hurtling at an unrelenting pace. Its adherents are in an uncompromising mood.

—Dilip Awasthi

“I can’t understand if they (BJP) are human beings or what.” Jyoti Basu, chief minister, West Bengal, 1993

Issue date **DECEMBER 15, 1990**



SAIBAL DAS

**E**ven as the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid tangle remained unresolved the tension across the country and worsening of communal relations were palpable. The most horrific manifestation was in Hyderabad and Aligarh

**HATRED: Even Calcutta was affected by communal riots**

where more than 100 people died in rioting. But even while the mood across the country remained ugly and militant—inflamed to a large extent by

the October 30 killings—there were voices of sanity too. There was a surprising awareness both among Hindus and Muslims that succumbing to fears and hatreds being fanned by politicians would simply pull the nation into even deeper depths of religious and social despair. But one thing was clear. The Hindus are in an uncharacteristically aggressive mood. Muslims insecure and groping for ways to lower the temperature while trying to ensure they will not be pushed into any religious surrender that would hurt their deepest sensibilities.

—Inderjit Badhwar

**RECALL**

L.K. Advani  
BJP president,  
1990

The BJP respects secularism and we have put secularism in perspective.



ISSUE DATE | **MAY 25, 1998**

**"We now  
have the  
capacity for  
a big bomb."**

*Prime Minister  
A.B. Vajpayee to  
INDIA TODAY*

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

FOR the six men who assembled in the sitting room of the prime minister's official residence at Race Course Road that hot Monday afternoon, it was a tense wait. As three simultaneous nuclear explosions rocked the scorching sands of the Pokhran test range in the Rajasthan desert at 3.45 p.m., the only sound they heard was the purring of the air conditioner. Exactly 10 minutes later, the phone rang. Principal Secretary Brajesh Mishra lifted the receiver hesitantly to hear an

excited voice cry "Done!" Putting the caller on hold, Mishra re-entered the room. Seeing his expression, Prime Minister Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, George Fernandes, Yashwant Sinha and Jaswant Singh could barely control their feelings. Advani was seen wiping away his tears. Picking up the receiver, Vajpayee, in an emotion-choked voice, thanked the two scientists who made it happen. The genesis of Operation Shakti can perhaps be traced back to March 20, the

# POKHRAN II

1998

**POWER HI:** The prime minister waves to cameras at the blast site in Pokhran





# LANDMARKS

# 25 YEARS

ISSUE DATE

**MAY 25, 1998**

**V**ajpayee has released a flood of pent-up energy, generated a mood of heady triumphalism. He has kick-started India's revival of faith in itself. To the West, the five explosions are evidence of Hindu nationalism on a Viagra high. To Indians, it is evidence we count, that there is nothing to fear but fear itself. Pokhran is only tangentially about security. Its significance is emotional. The target isn't China and Pakistan. It is the soul of India...The mood is euphoric. Not the time for aesthete contrarians to embrace treachery.

—Swapan Dasgupta



*"Any event that gives India pride inevitably provokes acidic comments outside."*

L.K. Advani, 1998

second day of the BJP-led Government's term. On that day, Department of Atomic Energy chief R. Chidambaram called on the prime minister. "It was not," says a Vajpayee aide, "a pure courtesy call." On April 8, Vajpayee summoned both Chidambaram and DRDO chief A.P.J. Abdul

Kalam and gave them the go-ahead for the tests. On the morning of May 7, hand-picked scientists from the DRDO and DAE arrived in Jodhpur. Travelling by night, they reached Pokhran early next morning. At some point thereafter, the devices were placed, keeping in mind the

tracks of spy satellites above. For the past few years, India has deliberately kept up a strange routine in Pokhran. At times a new shaft was dug; at other times an older one was cleaned out—the purpose was to provide a cover for the real activity at the right time.

—Manoj Joshi

BHAWAN SINGH



**FIREWORKS:** News of the blast sparked off celebrations

ISSUE DATE **JUNE 1, 1998**

**T**he Pokhran tests and their aftermath have radically redefined India's image of being a yogi in today's world of realpolitik. It is forcing other countries to re-evaluate their basic assumptions. Of India being a benign democracy—slow to anger and action. That image is being replaced by an India that is hawkish in the pursuit of national interests, driven by a regime capable of taking profound decisions to achieve it. "The transformation," says Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Jaswant Singh, one of the architects of the new policy, "has been from the moralistic to the realistic. It is one-sixth of humanity seeking its rightful place in the calculus of great powers." Even if that meant uncere- moniously jettisoning foreign-policy initiatives in the recent past. Former prime minister I.K. Gujral's doc-

trine of India giving more than it takes has been given the heave ho. "Frankly, it was a lot of toothless waffle," explains one of Vajpayee's aides. P.V. Narasimha Rao's policy of "nothing but the economy" has been modified to read "security first, the rest will follow". In a bid to muscle its way into the big boys' club, the BJP-led Government appears even willing to dump the hubris of India being a great moral leader that Nehru had wanted. So far so good. But diplomacy, as Muchkund Dubey, former foreign secretary, says, "calls for preparation and circumspection". After the first flush of success, the Government's handling of its new policy appeared to lack both finesse and the decisiveness it showed when it exploded the nuclear devices.

—Raj Chengappa and Manoj Joshi



**ZERO HOUR:** The explosion

**RECALL**

A.B. Vajpayee, prime minister, June 1998

Did Indira Gandhi ask for somebody's permission to carry out the 1974 tests?



JUNE 8, 1938

[illegible]—Maurice Stuckey, *Review*

**BOMB SQUAD:** (From left, in hats) Kalam, Chidambaram, Kakodkar and (extreme right) Santhanam

ISSUE DATE **JUNE 22, 1998**

**I**n their battle fatigues, they appeared like ageing heroes in a Bollywood pot-boiler. As they sat sweating in the makeshift control room—a small bunker littered with computers and control panels with press-button switches. One panel activated by the turn of a key started a timer which at 9 a.m. on May 11 sent a tiny current to trigger the explosions that shook the world.

An hour before, the Met officer, uncomfortable in his disguise as captain Adil Marzban, told them of an unexpected wind. The mission, he said, had to be on hold till the wind died. It could send accidental radiation fallout from the blasts towards nearby villages. By noon, the wind hadn't abated and it was a searing 43 degrees. R. Chidambaram, dressed as Major-General Natraj, removed

his Gorkha hat to stop the sweat from streaming down his face. On his left, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam sat impassively. Kalam was known as Major-General Prithviraj. But the mane of silver hair that stuck out under his hat was a giveaway. All this was part of the extraordinary precautions the team had taken to prevent news of its frequent visits to Pokhran from leaking out.

—Raj Chengappa

—Raj Chengappa

"We had the moral high ground, we still have the moral high ground. We didn't start it."

*Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan  
prime minister, June 1998*

ISSUE DATE **JUNE 22, 1998**



**A**nu Kapoor—host of *Antakshari*—lost quite a few fans. The Friday following the Pakistan tests, May 29, Kapoor apparently ended his programme with a Punjabi folk song which went, “*Asan mar jaana par nahin chhadna Kashmir*”. The immediate response was, “India is provoking us after our tests ...” Just before the flight back to Delhi I risked an argument. “So what if I tell you I am a Hindu?” I asked the shopkeeper who told me he had migrated from Indian Punjab. “Well, I would have to say you are a *zalim* (tyrant),” he said, leaving me thinking of a second Partition. Emotionally.

—Harinder Baweja in Islamabad

## RECALL

Jesse Helms  
US senator  
May 1958

India has shot itself in the foot; it has most likely shot itself in the head.





**SHEKHAR  
GUPTA**

*The author joined INDIA TODAY as senior correspondent in 1983, left as senior editor in 1995, and is now editor-in-chief and group CEO, The Indian Express.*

From the Afghan conflict to the Gulf War, from Tiananmen to the unravelling of the Eastern Bloc, INDIA TODAY was the first, and in many cases the only Indian publication to spend money on its own coverage.

# THRILLS, SPILLS

**I**F you worked at INDIA TODAY for half of its 25 years and that too from year 8 to 20 (1983-95), how else could you describe yourself but as a denizen of its middle kingdom? Many changes were taking place then in the world, as in India and INDIA TODAY. One of these was the arrival of the unwashed hack, the old-fashioned newspaper type, in what was, until then, derided in the press clubs as an elite five-star island whose (mostly) foreign-educated reporters stayed in five-star hotels, travelled by air—though they always flew “down”, to Srinagar or Sringeri.

But those were interesting times and it helped to be able to fly, down or up, buy the odd contact a lunch and turn in at a clean hotel at the end of the day, and sometimes, in my case, after counting the bodies of your own countrymen. Bhindranwale ruled Punjab; Assam was on the boil; the rest of the North-east was a bloody mess; Subhash Ghising had arrived in Darjeeling; Indira Gandhi, in her declining years, was losing her grip but was still blushingly embracing Fidel Castro at the Non-Aligned Summit. From Mrs Gandhi's embrace of Castro to Rajiv's “*naani yaad dila denge*” threat to the western Satan to MPs stampeding to get touchy feely with Clinton—even if for one fleeting moment—India has come a long way and many of these changes began in the mid-1980s.

In January 1984—while still on probation—I broke the story on the Tamil Tigers' training camps in India and was immediately called antinational by

Mrs Gandhi and her advisers. They said they were going to get me sacked, but I was still around to cover the march of her son's armies to fight the same Tigers and also when they killed him, in turn. A bit sad to seek vindication in tragedy, but isn't that often the parachute journalist's fate?

In those changing times, INDIA TODAY was the first Indian publication to globalise in so many different ways. The first computers arrived in 1984. Even editorially, we looked out at the big global story that could affect, and interest, India more than the usual backyard politics. So, from the Afghan conflict to the Gulf War, from Tiananmen to the unravelling of the Eastern Bloc, INDIA TODAY was the first, and in many cases the only Indian publication to spend money on its own coverage, though, more often than not, the parachute ended up tied to my back. “Time for fun and games,” Aroon would say, almost as he tossed the tickets. But before you hit the ground, he was hounding you for stories, and stories on deadlines.

What is it that INDIA TODAY taught us most of all as journalists? First, and most important, the humility and the professionalism to accept that there could—indeed always would—be a better way of doing a story than you had thought. So you listened to criticism, or criticised, tossing aside the hierarchy. Second, you delivered value for money, in quantity (somebody actually kept account of how many words you filed per issue) and quality, and on time. Indian media's first genuine meritocracy was a tough place to be in. You

couldn't survive without growing. You got opportunity, worked your backside off, got rewarded and, in the process, learnt the art and the tricks of running media organisations that so many of us, now the senior citizens of the INDIA TODAY Alumni Association, are trying to replicate elsewhere.

It's been five years since I left INDIA TODAY and I have the privilege to be in charge of one of India's most significant media organisations with its own awesome legacy and tradition. The challenge has been to blend this with what is commonly known—even in press clubs today—as the IT (INDIA TODAY) culture. Perhaps, that's why I didn't need to think twice before sending a 23-year-old to cover the war in Kargil, confident that our coverage would set the standards for the rest; telling my team that mediocrity is their biggest enemy, next only to hierarchy, that they need to keep pushing the envelope, even if it sometimes falls off the table.

Postscript: yes, we worked our backsides off, but we also had loads of fun, though often after flunking midnight deadlines when we tended to be at our creative best. So out came lines like, “Why is INDIA TODAY the complete newsmagazine? Because it is the Purie newsmagazine.” Or when designer Anup Gupta walked in one night and asked, “*Babbar Sher aaya tha kya (babbar sher, the lion, for Aroon)?*” “*Haan*. But how do you know?” asked an intern. “*Apni haddi chhod gaya hai*,” said Anup, pointing accusingly at the cigar stub sitting in the ashtray.



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“Over the last month, the most devastating weapon yet in the seemingly limitless arsenal of Punjab’s terrorists made its deadly debut—the jerry-built explosive device detonated in carefully selected crowded places.”

*India Today,*  
July 15, 1988

#### WHY ENEMIES?

They died not knowing why. In July 1988, a bomb blast killed 22 and injured 40 in Amritsar’s Katra Ahluwalia area. This photo was taken by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA about a minute after the blast.









# IMAGES

## 25 YEARS

### DEATH OF AN ICON

She had come to mourn his passing, and nothing could make her leave. Jayalalitha stayed put at MGR's funeral, turning a deaf ear to insults from those who did not welcome her presence. This photo was taken by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA in 1987.



### BY THE FIRE

The torch had passed to him, and soon destiny would thrust upon him the prime ministership of a nation. Rajiv Gandhi gazes at his mother's funeral pyre. This photo was taken by RAGHU RAI in November 1984.





#### BREATH OF DEATH

It was one of the worst industrial disasters in history. 2,200 people choked to death that night in Bhopal when methyl isocyanate gas leaked out of the Union Carbide factory. Thousands more were marked for life by the effects of the gas. Photo by RAGHU RAI, December 1984.



#### BLIND INJUSTICE

Degrees beyond the third: it was medieval, instant justice dispensed with a brutality shocking even by the Indian police's standards. In the end, 15 policemen were merely suspended for blinding 31 undertrials at the Bhagalpur jail in 1980. Photo by K.M. KISHAN



## HONOURABLE MEN

So are they all, all honourable men. The esteemed law makers of Uttar Pradesh take matters into their hands during the course of a (heated) debate on the confidence motion in 1997. Photo by SHARAD SAXENA.



## INFLAMED

Mayhem followed the assassination of Mrs Gandhi, as enraged mobs went on an anti-Sikh rampage. An image of the 1984 riots in Delhi by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA.





# IMAGES

## 25 YEARS

Pure Yoga

Dhirendra Brahmachari, wheeler dealer and big-time power broker. This photo was taken by RAGHU RAI in 1980.

Siddhivinayak Swami

Chandraswami, the godman with more temporal links than spiritual, peers out from behind the curtains. Photo by FAWZAN HUSAIN, 1995.



“A man of infinite contradictions, a *brahmachari* surrounded by luxury, a yoga teacher with immediate access to the prime minister.”

*India Today,*

November 15, 1980





NISHAAN-E-PAKISTAN

A.B. Vajpayee at the Minar-e-Pakistan, 1999. A half century on, a nation feels it has finally gained recognition from the half of it that its body was torn from at birth. Photo by BHAWAN SINGH.





### REBEL RUN

1997, Bengal. A rebel is born. Mamata Banerjee boycotted the AICC session and had her own show in Calcutta. Photo by SAIBAL DAS.



### MEDIA POWER

The pressure of the media, pictured by DHILIP BANERJEE at the Congress press conference in 1997.





FOR GOD'S SAKE?

It was an act of deadly retribution. The 13 serial bomb blasts in Bombay, March 1993, killed over 200 people and injured a thousand. Photo by NAMAS BHOJANI.





DHYAAN

Pandit Bhim Sen Joshi, doyen of the Kirana Gharana, immersed in the rendition of a raga. Photo by RAGHU RAI, September 1987.



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DECREPIT DERELICTS

Theirs is a pathetic plight. The widows of Varanasi, seen through PRASHANT PANJIAR's lens in 1987.

THE TWO OF US

A sarus crane that left its family and adopted human parents in Khajuraho. Photo by RAGHU RAI, April 1989.







DILIP  
BOBB

The author joined INDIA TODAY's editorial staff in December 1975, and was deputy editor from November 1986 to June 1995. At present he is executive editor of INDIA TODAY PLUS.

Those were chaotic but incredible days. Chasing Sanjay and his goon squads all over Tis Hazari courts during the Shah Commission hearings, a life or limb-threatening exercise.

# BATTLE SCARS

As jobs go, it didn't offer much. A princely salary of Rs 400. A battered typewriter in an office that was smaller than the *dhaba* round the corner. A staff of four with no previous experience of Indian journalism. And a venture that seemed, at the time, as precarious as the rickety desk I occupied. The launch was hardly auspicious. By the time we cobbled together the first issue, in December 1975, Mrs Gandhi's Emergency had chained the media to invisible, over-enthusiastic censors in Shastri Bhavan. On our office wall we hung a cartoon by Abu which had President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed signing the declaration while in his bathtub. As inspiration, it sufficed.

Our first issue, put together by our motley gang of 20-somethings, was headlined: "Who's Afraid of the Emergency?" We were soon to find out. Our first battle scars were acquired at 12 Willingdon Crescent—Mrs Gandhi's official residence—where Sanjay Gandhi held chaotic court. Each day, we would arrive to witness the goon squads, as we called them, embark on their next misadventure. We were often manhandled, had our cameras snatched away, even suffered the dubious distinction of Maneka Gandhi ordering the musclemen to "throw out these INDIA TODAY people". We may not have been setting the media world alight in those early days, but at least we were being noticed by the powers that were.

For 18 months, we spent long afternoons in

the Press Club over biryani and beer, hearing the horror stories without being able to chronicle them. Frustrating, but filling. When the emergency was lifted, and the media dam broke, we hit the ground running. Literally.

Those were chaotic but incredible days. Chasing Sanjay and his goon squads all over Tis Hazari courts during the Shah Commission hearings, a life or limb-threatening experience. Tracking the antics of the ill-fated Janata Party, described by colleague Sunil Sethi in his inimitable style as "brothel behaviour" was a cruel reminder that covering Indian politics was as hard on the soul as on the soles. It was journalism in the fast lane. From crass comedy a la Raj Narain to convulsive tragedy as in Sanjay's air crash, it was like being on a roller-coaster ride.

I remember the stampede as the entire office rushed to the crash site, minutes before Mrs Gandhi arrived. We almost felt like intruders as she broke down in front of our eyes and sobbed, the first time she had cried in public. Barely weeks later, I was interviewing Rajiv Gandhi at Safdarjung Road—his first media exposure. He was his normal self—charming, boyish, naive—confessing he "didn't know much about politics" and that "mummy has to be helped somehow". It was a Shakespearean tragedy in the making. And we had front row seats.

Mrs G's assassination was, after Operation Blue-star, the biggest story of

our careers. Sitting in the office night after night, while anti-Sikh riots ravaged the city, was literally an ordeal by fire. As it was for Rajiv Gandhi. We were all caught up in the initial euphoria. I remember sitting in the gallery in Washington listening to his address to senators and congressmen. His "I am young. I have a dream" speech was one of the most inspiring moments I was witness to. He seemed so fresh, so young, so devoid of the guile and deceit we had got so used to in Indian politicians that it seemed too good to last. It didn't. The real tragedy was that the cronies and officials around him seemed oblivious to it all.

I recall a remark made by a member of the PMO that in order to convince Rajiv to do anything "you've got to take Gopi Arora's thoughts and put them in Mani Shankar Aiyer's mouth". Prince Charming became, almost overnight, King Lear. It was a cautionary tale, and sadly, one that would be reenacted by successive prime ministers.

As the sole surviving member of the original team, I am often asked why I have stayed on so long when I could have accepted the lucrative offers that came my way. It's simple: I worked for the best newsmagazine in the country, in a job that took me all over the world and allowed me to interact with the most powerful people in the land. I had hugely talented and inspirational colleagues and no day was like the previous one. I wouldn't have changed that for all the shares in Infosys.



Indira Gandhi

Biju Patnaik

Raj Narain

Giani Zail Singh

Morarji Desai

Charan Singh

Devi Lal

Sheikh and Farooq Abdullah

Sanjay Gandhi

# LEADERS



Rajiv Gandhi

Laloo Prasad Yadav

A.B. Vajpayee

Jyoti Basu

George Fernandes

V.P. Singh

INDIA IS AN OVER-GOVERNED AND OVER-politicised country. It is a unique land where, as the indefatigable Piloo Mody put it, Charan Singh's views on Picasso count more than M.F. Husain's. It is a nation of leaders, with a cast of many thousand. Some endure interminably, while others have their 15 minutes of fame. For 25 years, INDIA TODAY has dogged them, capturing their moments of exhilaration and despondency. Now, history is retold through a selection of past reports on leaders both great and despicable. But always enthralling.



ISSUE DATE

OCTOBER 16, 1977

It was time for Mrs Gandhi to leave. Kamalapati Tripathi and Brahmanand Reddi decided they would escort her from her bedroom door to her car. After the first two attempts, they quickly changed their minds, and parked themselves in a safe place. Mrs Gandhi marked her time well. The slogans were not yet loud enough. As if she was giving an encore, she went in and out of her bedroom door three times. Finally, Mrs Gandhi walked out and stood on top of the car. The voices got hoarser. It all looked like a well-rehearsed play. One dramatic supporter threw himself across her car. When the driver revved up the engine, he quickly withdrew. The rest of the crowd was quickly hustled into the blue Matador vans, driven by Rajiv and Sanjay. The vans followed Mrs Gandhi, and the occupants were taken to do their routine of slogan shouting. Dharendra Brahmachari stayed behind to hold the fort.

Late in the evening of October 3 an informal cabinet meeting was called. Charan Singh, by now livid at the way the police had bungled, turned up 15 minutes late. By then the prime minister had accepted Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram's suggestion that the prosecution should not ask for police remand. Later, Mrs Charan Singh told a young member of the family: "*Chaudhary Sahib ko itne gusse me kabhi nahi dekha* (I have never seen him so angry)." The Chaudhary was heard to say, "They have sabotaged me once again. I will see to it that they are punished."

—Ajay Singh, Chand Joshi, Mandira Purie and Dilip Bobb



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# DEFIANT QUEEN



Sitting in the centre of the imperial ballroom where seven years ago she had welcomed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to sign the Simla Agreement, Mrs Indira Gandhi was being decidedly imperious. Sparks flew as her shrill voice echoed round the hall—and her tone was reminiscent of some departed Vicereine bent on silencing galling guests. “Of course,” she declared, at the end of her long tirade, “nobody takes the Indian press seriously anymore. More and more people read foreign papers and listen to the BBC for accurate information these days. Wherever I go the press maligns me. My meetings are never publicised. What I say is never accurately reported.” But still, interrupted a questioner, you get more publicity than any other leader. “Well,” replied Mrs Gandhi, her face lighting up with supreme satisfaction, “that’s because I am the centre of the stage. I have always been. The Government has put me at the centre of the stage.”

—Sunil Sethi and Prabhu Chawla



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

**MANY WISHES:**  
After her  
victory in 1980

“Let it be clear to all—Indira Gandhi has never been overpowered by grief.”

*Indira Gandhi, after Sanjay's death, August 16, 1980*



**I**ndira Gandhi certainly believes in the credo of safety in numbers. Since she stormed back to power in January, the indefatigable lady has visited 31 shrines. Last fortnight, she was in Madhya Pradesh at the Kamadgiri shrine. She also visited the Janaki Kund, where legend has it Sita bathed, and the holy rock where the footprints of Rama are said to be inscribed. Earlier, she visited the Anandeshwar Mahadev temple and the Kali Mandir near Jhansi. Her favourite, however, seems to be the Vaishnodaya shrine near Jammu at a height of 5,225 ft (see photo) even though it entails a 3 km climb from the helipad.

**S**he first began to run towards the crash. Then she composed herself and began to walk briskly. Reaching the stretcher, she knelt down to touch her son's body. Then she saw his face, her self-control vanished. Kneeling over the corpse she began to sob without restraint. As the priests completed the task of laying out the pyre, the spectators gazed at the woman who sat motionless in the centre of the family group. Hardly a muscle moved. A mere tightening of the lips, a straining of the neck, but the eyes were kept hidden by sunglasses. As she watched the growing blaze, there were those struck by the savage irony and the sudden switch in political metaphor. No one would now ask where the son will be without his mother. They would ask where the mother will be without her son.

—Sunil Sethi

**MOTHER INDIRA:** With son Rajiv after Sanjay's death in 1980

R.C. PANDEY

“Years ago, many feared her as Durga. Today they see her as a papier mache one.”

*Journalist Arun Shourie, April 15, 1982*



# LEADERS 25 YEARS

ISSUE DATE

**AUGUST 31, 1982**

It was her first visit to the US in 11 years. She looked cool, elegant and younger than her 65 years, in a red and white silk sari and a double string of Basra pearls. The famous white streak was more accentuated by the session with the hairdressers.

—Inderjit Badhwar



## VOICES

"Mrs Gandhi is God's gift to this country."

*President Zail Singh, March 31, 1983*

"I have always believed her to be a congenital liar."

*George Fernandes, November 16, 1978*

"I belong to Indira caste."

*Gundu Rao, Karnataka chief minister, February 1, 1980*

"We wanted to make her mother of the nation but she chose to be Sanjay's mother."

*P.R. Das Munshi, July 16, 1979*

"You have the temerity to say this to Indira Gandhi?"

*Indira Gandhi, to an opposition MP, 1982*

# GANDHIAN FADS

ISSUE DATE

**JULY 1, 1978**

Will there be a new era of Indo-US relations?

**Desai:** Now, why do you want to get into a new 'era'? What does the word era mean anyway? We have good relations with them and no misunderstanding should arise in the future.

**INDIA TODAY:** Can you tell us what misunderstandings have been cleared up?

**Desai:** What misunderstandings? You don't even know that? What can I tell you if you do not know that?

**IT:** Mr Prime Minister ... to

**FIRST AMONG EQUALS:** Desai in the prime minister's office

M. J. DESAI



# LEADERS 25 YEARS



"I hate to mention it over dinner but I find the idea quite revolting."

Vijayalakshmi Pandit, on naturopathy, November 1977



## TAU THE BULLY

ISSUE DATE

**JUNE 15, 1982**

**A**fter Governor G.D. Tapase committed the undemocratic faux pas, he was cowering on a sofa in Raj Bhavan. "This is Haryana!" yelled apoplectic Lok Dal MLAs, "bullets are going to fly."

As the verbal assault intensified, led by chief minister-aspirant Devi Lal, Tapase could only mumble. As his hand involuntarily touched his chin, it was brushed aside by Devi Lal. He tweaked the governor's chin: "You slave of Indira, you think you can get away with what you've done?"

—Chaitanya Kalbagh

almost every question you have replied in the manner of a schoolteacher reprimanding children.

**Desai:** This is not the way to ask questions.

**ir:** How would you like

them asked?

**Desai:** Why should I tell you? You don't know so many things and you ask questions ... You are the only person who's complaining. You should learn

from the people around you. **ir:** But you are surrounded by sycophants. Am I supposed to learn from them?

**Desai:** It seems you want to become prime minister.

—Madhu Trehan in New York

ISSUE DATE **AUGUST 16, 1979**

**M**orarji Desai, 83, looks like a man who has just been delivered from a laundry. He gives the impression of a man who has answers for all questions, or at worst, a counter-question which he considers to be an answer.

**Q:** How do you feel being out of the premiership?

**Desai:** Was I ever inconvenienced? I never feel any different. Here, there, everywhere. Whether you sit on a sofa or a chair, does it make any difference?

**Q:** If it makes no difference, why did you delay resigning as president of the Janata Parliamentary Party?

**Desai:** Why should I have to resign as leader? There was no vote of censure on the leader. Vote of censure

was on the government. It is your bee in the bonnet which makes you say I should have resigned. Why?

**Q:** Would you impose your beliefs?

**Desai:** No.

**Q:** If your son says he drinks alcohol?

**Desai:** If he drinks, he would not be here. I would live nowhere near him.

**Q:** What differences do you have with Rajneesh?

**Desai:** He has met me twice. Do you agree that through sex you get moksha? He advocates free sex. He said about me that this prime minister is sexually

starved. That is why he is like this. Now what do you say to such a man?

—Interviewed by Aron Purie



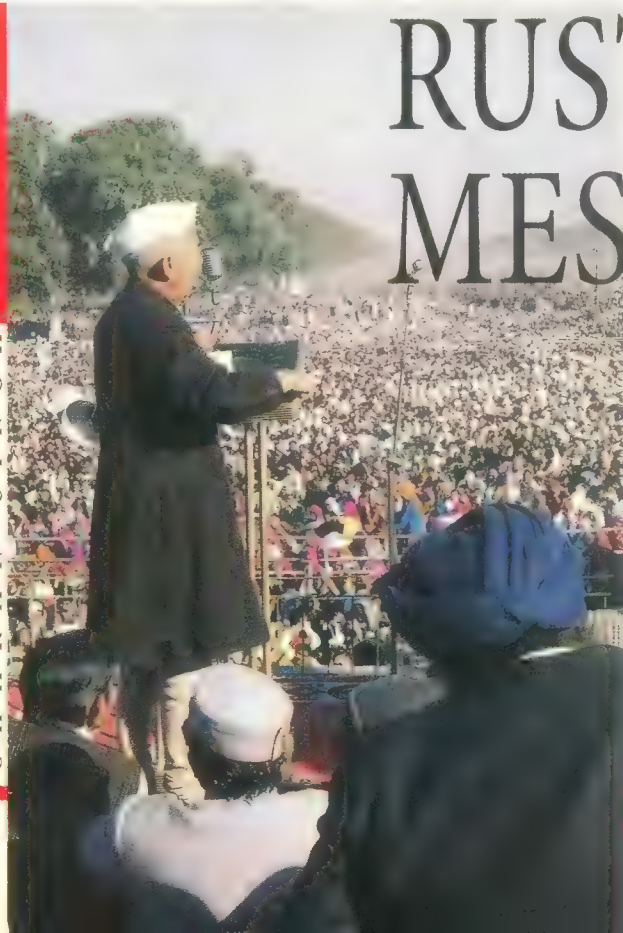
# RUSTIC MESSIAH

ISSUE DATE

**JANUARY 1, 1980**

**C**haran Singh. A singular obsession with the "real India" drives him as strongly as his preoccupation with power. Like a cracked LP record stuck on a single groove he harps on the disparities between the cities and the villages, the villainy of industrialisation, and his patent "small is beautiful" philosophy to increase employment.

CHARAN SINGH





# LEADERS 25 YEARS VOICES

"Charan Singh appears to be a mental case."

*Devi Lal, August 31, 1982*

"Raj Narain has a deranged mind. He has gone mad."

*Charan Singh, May 15, 1982*

"You were spreading a foul smell."

*Morarji Desai to Raj Narain, July 1, 1978*

## BRAHMIN MAGIC

ISSUE DATE

**JUNE 30, 1986**

A tantrik mantra was invoked for Congress Working President Kamalapati Tripathi. The 83-year-old often resorted to tantrik ritual. When he sensed he had a big fight on his hands, pundits travelled to his Delhi home with *kamandals* of Ganga-jal. But as he prepared to face his biggest crisis—censure or expulsion by the AICC—the magic failed.

—Prabhu Chawla



KAMALAPATI TRIPATHI

Defiantly he proclaims, "All mill-made cloth will be exported. Only handloom cloth will be allowed for internal consumption." The only concession he has for

industry is telling them: "If villages prosper, cities will also prosper. If farmers prosper, their purchasing power will also go up." He tells newsmen travelling

with him: "I can't just make promises only to get votes. I have to tell the truth. There has to be a polarisation."

—Amarnath K. Menon  
and Arul B. Louis

ISSUE DATE **AUGUST 1, 1979**

The ugly politicians are faceless freaks: born of a reckless greed to grab power, fed on unscrupulous ambition to retain it, their ultimate lust is geared to self-preservation. Nothing else exists in the minds of the khaki-clad effigies that stalk the political ruins of Delhi these days. Like bands of itinerant eunuchs roaming the streets to celebrate the curse of their social ostracism, politicians too have come to represent the rock-bottom of Indian society. Faithless, fickle and fragmented in



THE UGLY POLITICIAN: Blending the worst of Charan Singh, Raj Narain, Jagjivan Ram, et al

their chronic quest for power, they have reduced the ethics of the power game to a squalid striptease. Like chanting *hijras*, who lift their skirts at every corner to display their deformed genitalia, India's leaders have come out in the open to parade their savage sins. Politics has become the last refuge of the impotent. The system has been reduced to a sordid self-image of a few self-obsessed old men fighting their bitter quarrels before gasping their last. A peculiar psychosis has infiltrated Parliament since last fortnight's dogfight for the premiership began.

—Arul B. Louis and Sunil Sethi

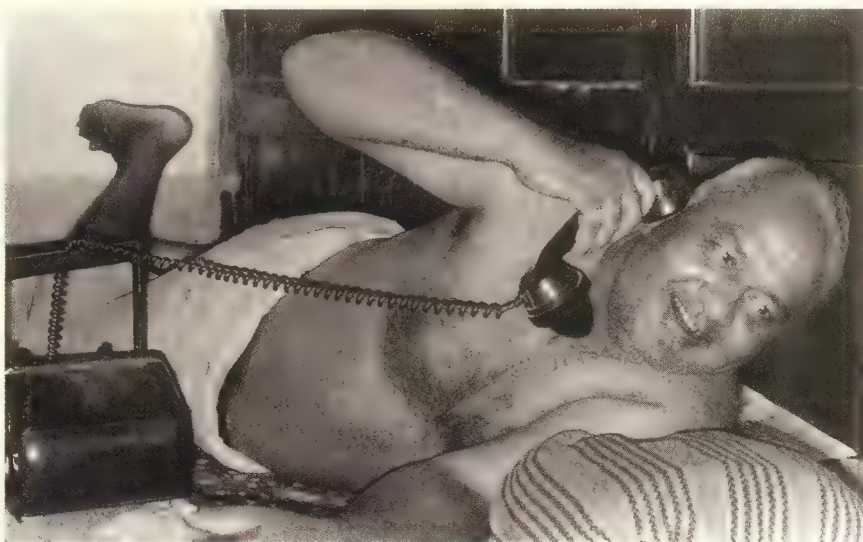
## THE BUFFOON

ISSUE DATE

**AUGUST 16, 1979**

PHONEY HERO: Mrs Gandhi suffered the ignominy of losing to him

His only emotional attachment in life, according to one associate, is to the telephone. Loath though he might be to admit it, he is attached to some of the conveniences of modern



RAJ NARAIN




## LEADERS

25  
YEARS

“Why can’t I be PM? I’m more qualified than Morarji. I’ve gone to jail more times.”

Raj Narain, August 16, 1979

life. He grumbles when airplanes are delayed, though he himself delays them all the time. He growls at his many assistants if his trunk-calls do not come through. And landing at airports, he hops into the first car he sees—leaving Cabinet ministers to whom they belong trailing behind. “*Budtameez, badmash, bhago yahan se* (Fools, get out of here),” he barks at his followers when intruded upon. But as Ram Vilas Paswan, one of his ardent followers, explains: “It’s his manner to be short-tempered. He doesn’t mean it. He is one of the most kind-hearted men around.” —Sunil Sethi



### GOD WHO RULED

ISSUE DATE  
**JAN 15, 1988**

“When he speaks a few words, we get 4 lakh votes.”  
C.N. Annadurai, on MGR.

**A**s news of M.G. Ramachandran’s death spread, Madras succumbed to grief and anarchy. Vandals began pelting stones, burning buses, uprooting road dividers, looting shops, setting them ablaze and chiselling off the statue of M. Karunanidhi, DMK leader and MGR’s arch political foe. Hurling stones and shattering the window panes of Pals Restaurant on Mount Road, Rafi, 21, assisted by a gang of 100 AIADMK members said: “Why should Madras survive with MGR gone?” Mourned Chandrasekhar, 23: “The world will never see another leader like MGR.” Unmindful of the advancing police, Raja said, “With MGR dead, what’s the use of us living?” —Anita Pratap and S.H. Venkatramani



THE CONGRESS' HAND:  
Sanjay campaigning

# BRASH HEIR

ISSUE DATE | **JUNE 1, 1980**

**S**anjay Gandhi has no time to spare. Those who do, irritate him profoundly. When he arrived in Ghaziabad, there was the usual song-and-dance atmosphere: banners and streamers and Lata Mangeshkar purring from the loudspeakers. There were also two Sikh netas, with long, white beards, implacably holding forth on the greatness of Congress(I) rule. When one saw Sanjay arrive, he revved his speech into high gear, drumming up last-minute enthusiasm in an audience wilting in the heat. Look, he said into the mike, what a great leader Sanjayji is: he is not only on time, but five minutes ahead of schedule. Giving the crowd a nonchalant once-over, Sanjay irritably looked at his watch.

The Sikh was advised to give up. Sanjay took over, delivered his set speech, which he had made word for word at 15 earlier stops, and was gone in 10 minutes flat leaving elderly statesmen used to leisurely elocution contests panting for breath. “He has the impatience of youth,” remarked one cliché-worn politician, but a smooth-talking Youth Congress volunteer assessed Sanjay’s style in more contemporary plain-speak: “Take it or leave it—that’s what he means. Here is a new leader who means business. He doesn’t ramble like our older leaders who think they have all the time to tell the Ramayana. And his audiences appreciate his business-like attitude.”

—Sunil Sethi





INDERJIT  
BADHWAR

The author was INDIA TODAY's foreign correspondent (Washington) from 1976 to 1986. He became features editor in August 1986 and was executive editor from August 1988 to July 1997. At present, he is editor-in-chief, Media Transasia.

INDIA TODAY was the new Indian adventure. Killing shibboleths. Tilting at the journalistic robots of conventional wisdom.

# SECOND TAKES

A few years ago—about three to be exact, even though it looks like an eon—I stopped writing political copy. This had been my stock-in-trade for more than 20 years. But I'll share a secret with you: I hated it. I hated it because you really cannot play around with punctuation the way I have with the dashes in the first line of this piece. Because you can't play around with the language. And because you begin to suffer from etymological asphyxiation. You're allowed to use the words like "polity" and "underclass" and "Congress culture" and, as a reward, get to bask in the beneficent benediction of Girilal Jain and others. But coin a phrase like "etymological asphyxiation" in the midst of an analysis of the Mandal Commission report and you will pray that the editor will use only the most painless method of damming the source of your creative secretions.

But most of all I stopped because I was bored brainless with reading my own political copy. I mean, face it. In how many different ways can you write about V.P. Singh's contradiction management, the importance of the Third Force, dynasty and sycophancy in Congress, political inner circles and outer circles, decline and fall of Parliament, electoral swing-o-meters, regional satraps, dissidents galore, South Block mandarins, Robert Ludlum political potboilers, saffron machismo and saffron flaccidity and so on?

God knows, I tried, and the more I tried to write differently the more the stories sounded the same. Until it was time to bid a firm adieu to my make-believe world of purple proselytising. Just as

I had said goodbye in 1986 to the US where I had spent 20 exciting years.

Until I got—of course!—bored. Not with the country but with myself. There too, as an investigative journalist with several newspapers and on television I was hounded by how to write differently about executive privilege, mob rackets, credibility gaps, generation gaps, gender bias, stonewalling, sex workers, favourite sons, lame ducks, hawks, jingoists.

And I stopped reading my own stories. I sounded too much like the me that my specialisation wanted rather than the me that I was. Really, an old-fashioned hippie, who leaped out of the comforting (and unthinking) womb of doctrinaire socialism into the Woodstock Generation. That too was because even though outwardly a proud Nehruvian, I was inwardly bored to death. Bob Dylan and Procol Harum and WHO and the Incredible String Band Quartet stimulated my juices in a way that the height of the Bhakra dam and the temperatures of Bokaro and Durgapur could not.

Besides, this was the land of Norman Mailer and Hemingway and Faulkner and Algren and Miller and Bellow and Kerouak and Singer ... yippie! But Woodstock evanescenced after the Vietnam war. And after a while American middle classness takes over. And you're frightened of the prospect of being a stretcher-bearer like Hemingway or listening for days on end to Kerouak's waves at Big Sur, or streaking like Joplin's fans and you're afraid to let it all hang out and you're back to being a professional (after all what did you get out of Columbia

Journalism School, you hear your daddy saying) and you're back to writing politically correct prose for politically correct journalism.

I suppose the escape from reality—or boredom—in the American idiom, would have been to get back to that Loft in New York's East Village or start a dairy farm in Vermont or beat Dhondy and Seth and Arundhati to the draw. In a leap of faith I chose to come to India. Actually, I came back not so much to India as to the magazine INDIA TODAY which seemed to be doing far less boring things than I was doing in America. INDIA TODAY was the new Indian adventure—not mine. I mean, the country's. Killing shibboleths. Tilting at the journalistic robots of conventional wisdom. It was what India herself would become two decades later—a cocky and confident world-brat of the information technology era. Then, we buried everybody—Rajiv, V.P. Singh, Farooq Abdullah, Vinay Katiyar, Advani, Vajpayee, Chandra Shekhar, Ambani, Harshad, Laloo, Mulayam, Amitabh, Nixon, Indira, Kissinger, Morarji, Bukhari, Shoba De, Shabir Shah, Yasin Malik, Zia, Syed Shahabuddin. We kept the fires burning as the wheels were turning. But it was still comfortable political journalism. The middle classness of it all stood out in stark relief when I covered the Kumbh Mela or the burning ghats of Varanasi or Bhimsen Joshi in a rhapsody of raag-ic prayer.

I believe in rainbows. Because I know that somewhere at the end of one is that Loft in the East Village, the book that Bellow never wrote (but I will), and the political story that nobody ever wrote.



# LEADERS

# 25 YEARS

## VOICES

**"I consider politics very boring."**

*Sanjay Gandhi, August 15, 1976*

**"Once during a debate Sanjay said 'concept of poverty is changing'. It refutes that he had no philosophy."**

*Jagdish Tytler, Congress MP, October 16, 1980*

**"Even if they ditch me I'll never ditch them."**

*Khushwant Singh, on Sanjay and Maneka, January 1, 1978*

ISSUE DATE | **APRIL 16, 1980**

For Sanjay, flying had in the last few years become a singular obsession, perhaps the only release from the growing pressures of an active political life. It gave him a special "high". "He was a damned good flier," says an Uttar Pradesh government pilot who used to go aloft with him at the Delhi Flying Club. "Flying seemed to be in his blood." The Pitts S-2A aircraft with a 200 HP Lycoming engine which Sanjay was flying is one of the best-known competition aerobatics aircraft. The plane had been cleared for airworthiness four days earlier, but San-

jay seemed to have set his mind on mastering it long before that. Instructors at the Flying Club did not share his enthusiasm but he had no ears for cautionary advice. And they were often too embarrassed to point out the hazards. He seemed possessed by the thrill of risky manoeuvres in mid-air. Flying had overtaken his earlier obsession of fast driving. Often he would "tease" friends in the air by swooping down to just a few feet about the ground or turning off the ignition at 4,000 ft. Other friends who knew him in his early days remember the same "teasing" as he drove his van. "He used to take the sharpest turns on Safdarjung Road," recalls one, "he just loved the speed of it." —Sunil Sethi

**TAKING WING: Off on one of his flights**



KISHORE CHAND/NATIONAL HERALD

BAL THACKERAY



HEMANT PITHWA

## THE BOSS

ISSUE DATE

**MAY 15, 1985**

**T**he drawing room stuffed with gods and tigers was crammed to capacity and more. The thin man in spotless white stood quietly in a corner smoking his trademark pipe as a string of people touched his feet. Bal Thackeray was a happy man. "Today we have proved that Bombay belongs to the Maharashtrians," he said with that famous clipped smile, muttering, "Jai Maharashtra. Now they will have to listen to us." It was his finest hour. —Jagannath Dubashi

ISSUE DATE

**MAY 31, 1993**

**I**t's difficult to pigeonhole a man like Biju Patnaik. Three days after thousands of irate striking employees went on a rampage inside the secretariat in Bhubaneswar, destroying property and roughing up senior officials, the Big Daddy of Indian politics was in Delhi trying to glue together the fractious Janata Dal. "I told these stupid chaps," the chief minister says of the mob that took potshots at him, "at least you should have learnt your cricket. You can't even bowl properly." This is classic Bijuspeak. At 78, he doesn't care a fig about anyone or anything. He speaks his mind and he

BIJU PATNAIK



SAIBAL DAS

## ORISSA BULL



does his own bidding. And no, he's not senile. Just his usual colourful self, letting off steam against a world he thinks is collapsing around him.

In many ways, Biju is a bit of a pulp book hero. At a towering 6' 2" and ramrod straight even after bypass surgery and persistent asthma, he is the Dirty Harry of Indian politics ... He slaps people when he's angry, talks of castrating rapists, publicly encourages people to beat up erring officials.

—Soutik Biswas

## NETA BABU

JAGANNATH MISHRA



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

ISSUE DATE | **SEPTEMBER 15, 1982**

**B**etween strangled giggles and gulps—like a drowning man coming up for air—Bihar's Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra confronts visitors. His pudgy hands, flashing six rings nervously, finger first one pen, then another. Greasy hair slicked back from a round, jowly face, his eyes shift. He grunts and moves his bulk in the chair. Fawning officials wait in hushed silence. Ministers and hangers-on line the edges of his office for a few minutes of his time. When asked a particularly uncomfortable question, such as his alleged obsession with tantric rituals, his face turns a colour of deep chocolate. "*Fareb hai, fareb hai ... sab fareb hai* (Lies, lies ... all lies)," he mutters, even more frantically shifty-eyed, like some desperately beleaguered form of caged ape in a travelling circus.

—Sunil Sethi

## LION AND THE CUB

ISSUE DATE | **SEPTEMBER 15, 1982**

**H**ere was Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the lion of Kashmir who has in one way or another dominated the affairs of the state for 50 years and put a firm print on India's destiny, in the waning years of his life confronting a dilemma which comes inevitably to towering men such as he: to whom should his legacy pass? In a flurry of decisions virtually forced upon him, the Sheikh last fortnight made up his mind with uncharacteristic finality: he cast aside son-in-law Ghulam Mohammad Shah, 62, and inducted into his Cabinet elder son Farooq Abdullah, 45, clinching an issue unresolved for 18 months. The climax came in an annexe of Srinagar's Raj Bhavan whose windows and balconies command

the finest view of the poplar-fringed Dal Lake. Inside, in a simple ceremony on the morning of August 23, Farooq repeated the oath of office and secrecy as health minister to the prompting of Governor B.K. Nehru. Then, his eyes brimming with tears, he reached down to embrace first his mother and then his father. The Sheikh blinked back his own tears and seemed momentarily overwhelmed and oblivious of the tumult barely held back by security men. After a few moments, he was helped to his feet and guided to his waiting Mercedes, quietly turning his back on the melee around his son. A bystander shook his head and remarked sadly, "For all practical purposes we are living in the post-Sheikh era." —Suman Dubey

SHEIKH AND FAROOQ ABDULLAH

**HIS FATHER'S SON:** Since Independence they have dominated politics in the Valley

BHAWAN SINGH



## FOOTNOTE BABA

ISSUE DATE |

**MARCH 31, 1991**

**T**here were no hidden barbs, no off-colour jokes to mark that occasion. There was silent appreciation of this gauche, once universally despised figure who had dared to be



CHANDRA SHEKHAR

prime minister for the past four months. If ever a politician had redeemed himself during the last few days in office in the eyes of his countrymen but, more significantly, his opponents, it was Chandra Shekhar.

—Inderjit Badhwar

*"Indira was a political person, Rajiv is a social climber."*

Chandra Shekhar  
October 15, 1986

ISSUE DATE | **SEPTEMBER 30, 1982**

**T**he sun's rays had barely cleared the chill air of the Valley as the gun-carriage, the Sheikh's body in a plain wooden casket heaped with flowers, son Farooq keeping vigil at his feet, began its journey escorted by dignitaries, men of the Sikh Light Infantry with arms reversed, and the pipes and drums of the Ladakh Scouts and Naga Regiment playing the Slow Death March.

**ADIEU: The Sheikh's funeral**



The grief burst out like an uncontrollable wave. The salutation, *sange shero*—our lion—was on everyone's lips. People wept, chanted dirges and melancholy slogans, beat their breasts in rhythmic frenzy and flung flowers as the body of their baba wove through the narrow streets. People fainted, several injured in the crush, on a day when possibly 10 lakh people came on the streets with remarkable dignity and discipline. —Suman Dubey

SUMAN DUBEY

*"I'm not ready for burial. I will bury others before I go."* Farooq Abdullah, February 15, 1994

ISSUE DATE |

**DECEMBER 1, 1977**

**I**can't help the feeling that in this part of the world they regard my father as a prophet. I sometimes feel like Churchill's son. There's a terrible responsibility thrust upon you. It's a continual strain: it can do terrible things to you."

The speaker is a handsome 40-year-old doctor dressed in a smart tweed coat and flannel trousers, a karakuli cap on his head. His manner is relaxed, his

speech disarmingly candid. Specially as the source of his strain—his father—sits across the room. Farooq Abdullah is the Sheikh's eldest son. He has lived for 12 years in England, married an Englishwoman and adopted British nationality in a sort of self-imposed exile.

"Frankly, I never contemplated coming back to India because of the terrible treatment meted out to

my father. For long the Sheikh was put before India as a traitor. There were times when your best friends said *yeh log to such mein gaddar hain* (These people must really be betrayers). During the years I lived in England, I used to ask myself, 'What have I to offer myself, my children, if I go back to India?' When we came back in 1972 for a short time I thought my father and family needed me. I was wanted here. I asked my wife and she said, 'If you've made up

your mind I have no objections.' So we stayed. But the expectations are sometimes frightening. There is absolutely no privacy here. People just walk into your bedroom. I just hope things work out."

—Sunil Sethi



FREQUENT FLIER: Farooq's may state abroad drew much criticism

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



LEADERS  
**25**  
YEARS

VOICES

"Sanjayji is also my *rahnuma* (guide)."

Union Home Minister Zail Singh, March 16, 1982

"If my leader said pick up a broom and be a sweeper I'd have done that."

Zail Singh, July 15, 1982

"I'm not interested in the stability of all governments. I'm interested in the governments run by my party."

Union Home Minister Zail Singh, October 16, 1980

"Caligula's horse."

The Indian Express, on Zail Singh, July 15, 1982

BHASKAR PAUL

G I A N I Z A I L S I N G H



BEHIND EVERY MAN: Behind Singh's success was Mrs Gandhi's backing

RAGHU RAI

# EARTHY COURTIER

ISSUE DATE

**FEBRUARY 28, 1987**

For two years no Union minister has officially called on Singh, not even when summoned. Last fortnight, the road to Rashtrapati Bhavan was alive with activity as cavalcades ferried worried ministers. Within 10 days, Home Minister Buta Singh called on the President four times carrying messages from the prime minister. He was followed by Minister of State for Surface Transport Rajesh Pilot. Defence Minister V.P. Singh also made a courtesy call. And, for the first time since 1984, Rajiv was in telephonic touch with the President every alternate day. That the ministerial missions and telephonic conversations carried a ring of urgency was proof that the President's message had gone home. No longer was he prepared to serve as a rubber-stamp and accept the ignominy of being ignored—often humiliated—by the young prime minister and his government. Suddenly, the boot was on the other foot. —Prabhu Chawla

ISSUE DATE **NOVEMBER 13, 2000**

Bengal's decline may be the subject of Bhistorical study but for anybody and anything that has fled the state since 1977 the reason is more immediate: the stifling nature of Jyoti Basu's cadre-cracy. From Amar Singh to Bipasha Basu, MP to model, successful India is packed with refugees from Basuland. Calcutta, in the words of a cynic, is the "world's biggest old-people's home". Its cybercafes are frequented by retired folk sending e-mail to children abroad. This week, Basu could join the queue.

—Ashok Malik

# GENTLE RED

**BHADRALOK:** Communist elite, the venerable Basu





# LEADERS

## 25 YEARS



"My appearance should be such that nothing corrupt can come near me."

*NTR, August 31, 1986*

"I am not a glamour boy but a *tapasvi* (ascetic)."

*NTR, July 31, 1991*



**FRIENDS:** Fernandes coming out of jail in 1977. Sushma Swaraj is by his side.

"What is lacking in character that makes men behave like rats?"

*George Fernandes, at a FICCI meeting, June 1, 1979*

"My party is totally sick."

*George Fernandes on the Janata Dal, November 11, 1991*

## SOUTHERN PRIDE

ISSUE DATE

**JANUARY 15, 1983**

**N**TR offers no palliatives, no solutions. His message is direct, and aimed at the Telugu heart. He speaks of poverty, of Telugu honour which is trampled upon because Delhi appoints and

topples chief ministers at will, of the Telugu language and its neglect, of the need to give property rights to women. And to the delight of his inflamed audiences, he ridicules MLAs who "are happy if they get a vehicle with a flag, a phone, and a bungalow". —Suman Dubey

N. T. RAMA RAO

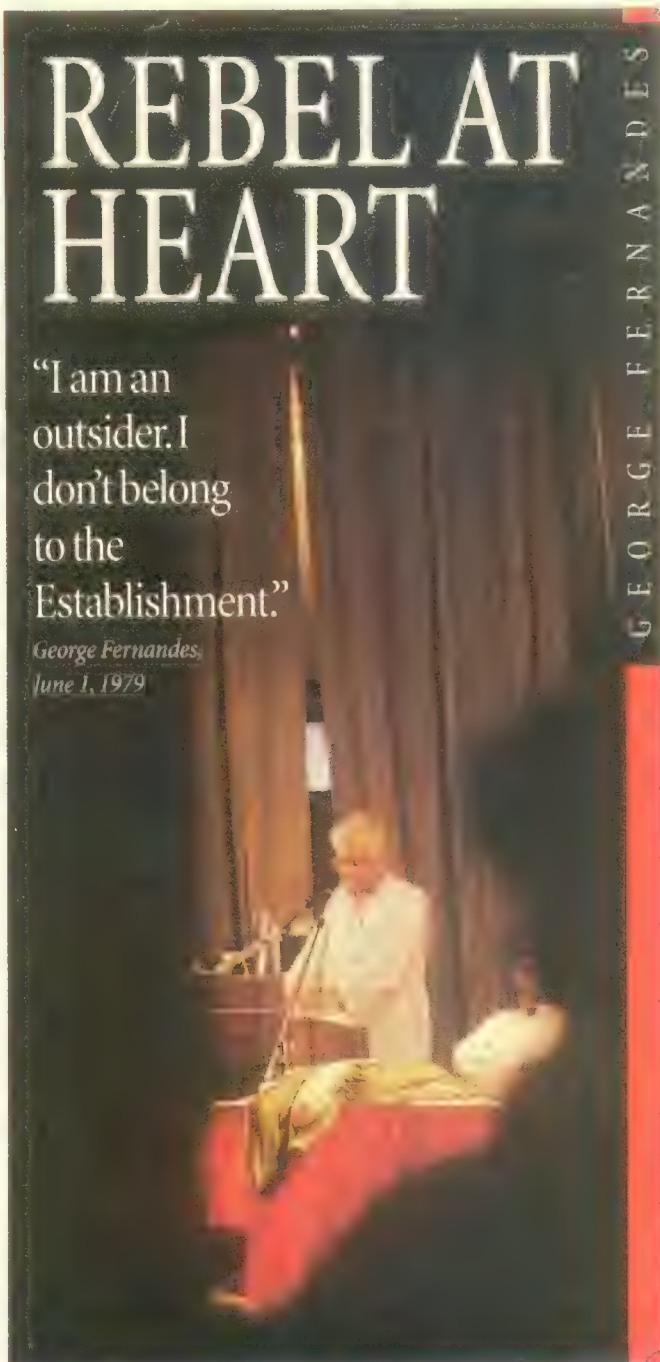


## REBEL AT HEART

"I am an outsider. I don't belong to the Establishment."

*George Fernandes,*

*June 1, 1979*



HEMANT PITHWA

ISSUE DATE

**MAY 18, 1988**

**C**ontroversy and George Fernandes are inseparable. In 1974, he led a national railway strike that nearly brought the Government of India to its knees. Three years later, as industry minister in the Morarji Desai government, he locked horns with Coca-Cola and IBM and threw them out of India. Last week, as if to show the fire still burns, the 68-year-old Lohiaite firebrand brought Sino-Indian relations to the lowest of the decade. This in less than six weeks of assuming charge as the 30th defence minister of independent India. Paradoxically, Fernandes' tempestuous ways have never affected his political standing. His detractors may denounce him as a misguided maverick, but few believe that he is not guided by both logic and conviction. Fernandes may be impetuous, but he is no greenhorn. His arguments on national security have been marked by consistency in sabre-rattling on China. He has succeeded in shifting the country's security concerns to where defence specialists, and indeed the Ministry of Defence's own annual reports, have been saying they ought to be—somewhere between Islamabad and Beijing.

—Manoj Joshi

GEORGE FERNANDES





PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

# SWEET TO SOUR

ISSUE DATE | **JUNE 15, 1991**

I have a dream," he said then, in that summer of '85. And we, too, dreamed with him. It was truly an Indian summer then, that summer of Rajiv Gandhi. No leader since Nehru had brought with him such brightness and hope. Or such a believable vision of 21st century India. It was not just his age. Or the attractiveness of his personality. Or even his pedigree. There was then a special radiance accompanying him, a karmic configuration that had led him to this

moment of awesome responsibility. Out of tragedy had emerged lustre and light. That was then, when the world was his appreciative stage and the applause a genuine acknowledgement of a leader who promised both excitement and glamour. And, above all, change. That all that changed in the blink of history's eye was a tragedy made greater by his promise and his prestige. Somewhere along that lonely road, the dream died. And we all died, a little. —Dilip Bobb





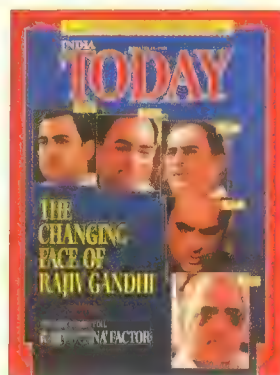
ISSUE DATE **AUGUST 16, 1980**

The pressure on him to leap into the fray is growing. Last fortnight, 250 MPs hosted a dinner in Rajiv's honour. Though Rajiv and his mother cried off at the last minute, the message was obvious. Rajiv seems overwhelmed and uncomfortable with this sudden elevation in stature. "I really don't know what to say to them," he confesses. "I don't know much about politics and even less about who these people are and what they represent."

—Dilip Bobb and Prabhu Chawla



BHAWAN SINGH



ISSUE DATE

**FEBRUARY 29, 1988**

South Block has snuffed out Camelot. The "handsomest PM" is taking on a jowly resemblance to Arun Nehru. He's gained 3 kg and lost most of his hair. The bounce in stride now comes with effort. He sports a churlish look: the corners of his mouth droop like an inverted crescent and he blinks in confusion.

—Inderjit Badhwar and Prabhu Chawla

"Enemies of the Congress are enemies of the nation."

*Rajiv Gandhi, November 30, 1988*

"We'll teach them such a lesson they will remember their grandmothers."

*Rajiv Gandhi, on the opposition, June 15, 1987*

## VOICES



BHAWAN SINGH

"Ayodhya is where Ram is, Congress is where Rajiv is."

*P. Chidambaram, May 31, 1988*

"Rajiv has achieved what his grandfather could not achieve in his lifetime."

*R. Venkataraman, January 15, 1981*

Never leave hold of what you've got until you've got something else. J. Hampstead smooth and lightweight fabric to make life move.

ONE WORLD ONE FABRIC







"There are new worlds even beyond the stars."

*A.B. Vajpayee after election defeat, January 31, 1985*

"He's a cad and a coward who should not be allowed to occupy high office."

*Subramanian Swamy on Vajpayee, December 31, 1983*

"What would be a greater public purpose than to resolve the tangle and construct the temple?"

*A.B. Vajpayee, July 31, 1991*

"The PM makes the foreign policy, the foreign secretary implements it and you translate it into Hindi."

*Vasant Sathe, MP, to foreign minister Vajpayee, August 1, 1978*

ISSUE DATE

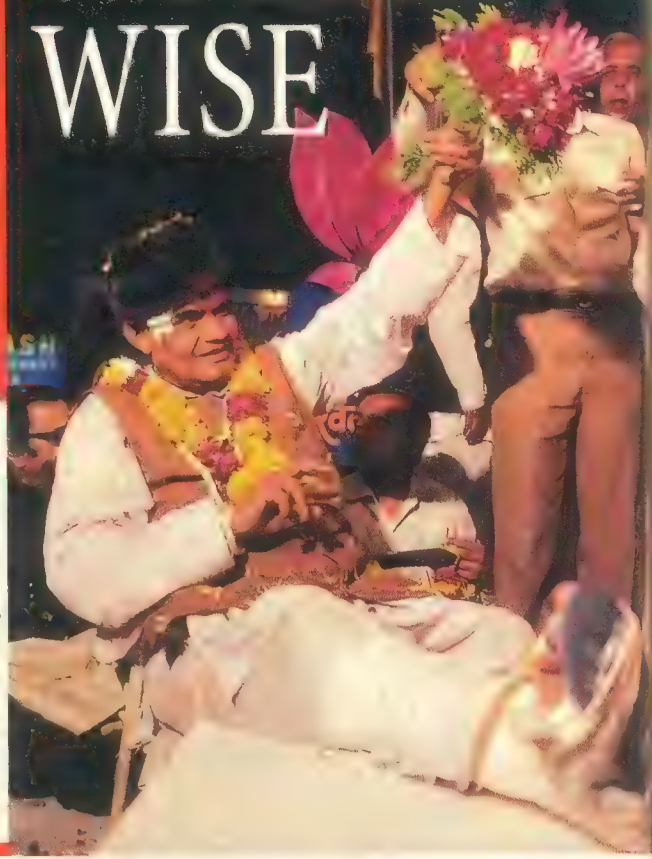
APRIL 15, 1982

The trouble with Atal Bihari Vajpayee, 55, is he is too transparent. A rotund, dhoti-clad orator given to overheated rhetoric, his misfortune is he heads a party consisting largely of the RSS. Ever since the BJP was formed in 1980, Vajpayee, its president, has been playing out a battle of wits with his opponents in the party. The battle will have no winners or losers—such is the BJP. But its highs and lows have ruffled the party's facade of solidarity. Vajpayee's differences with a section led by L. K. Advani, Vijaya Raje Scindia and S.S. Bhandari, surface with predictable regularity. He drew fire from his critics when he said in Andhra Pradesh his party was prepared to cooperate with the Congress(I) Government if it came out with "viable programmes" for "burning problems" like unemployment.

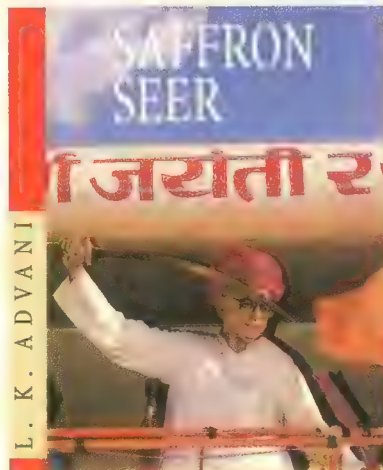
—Chaitanya Kalbag

## WORDLY WISE

A . B . V A J P A Y E E



DILIP BANERJEE



L . K . A D V A N I

"I would like Hindu, Bharatiya and Indian to be synonymous."

*L.K. Advani, April 30, 1991*

ISSUE DATE

MARCH 31, 1990

You've seen him somewhere. Not in some shady recess of the mind, but in some mundane place. Here he is—in the middle of Laxman's cartoon, the bristle-brush moustached Common Man peeping at the political world in befuddlement. Blow him up poster-size and he bears an uncanny resemblance to Lal Krishan Advani. In life, Advani sports not only the moustache but also the quizzical countenance of the little old fellow. A quintessential everyday middle classness. Easy to identify with. But there the resemblance ends. And the enigma starts.

—Inderjit Badhwar

H.K. RAJASHEKAR



ISSUE DATE

MARCH 16, 1979

Vajpayee, who as Jan Sangh leader preached a hawkish foreign policy including a strong line against Pakistan and opposition to the Soviet Union, today has turned a dove that sings the Soviet Union's praise and talks of continuity in foreign policy. This, not only to project himself as a responsible, mature leader, but because in reality he has no clear policy to implement when confronted with the exigencies of power.

—Arul B. Louis





**RIDE TO RULE:** V.P. Singh on the campaign trail

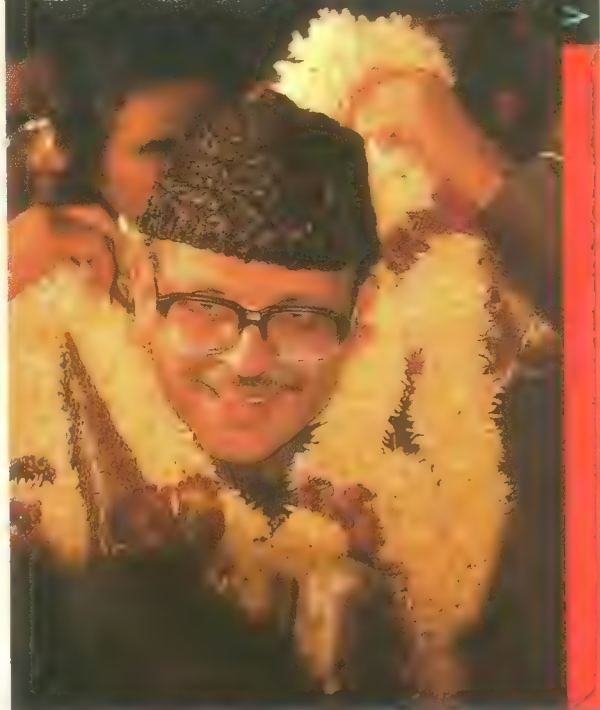
"I would be a disaster as prime minister."

V.P. Singh, July 31, 1988

"The Janata Dal is a silly experiment."

V.P. Singh, October 31, 1991

# ARTFUL DODGER



RAGHU RAI

ISSUE DATE

**DECEMBER 15, 1989**



It was an orderly meeting, but an extraordinary happening. On the dais were Madhu Dandavate, presiding, V.P. Singh, Devi Lal, and Chandra Shekhar, an air of expectant jubilation on his face. Dandavate called for nominations. The first surprise came when V.P. Singh proposed Devi Lal's name. It was seconded by Chandra Shekhar. Since there were no other names, Dandavate declared Devi Lal elected. A shocked silence fell on Central Hall: all hell broke loose outside.

Four minutes later the change came. Devi Lal rose and thanked V.P. Singh for supporting him. He said the election was really a fight against the corruption of the Rajiv Gandhi government and the leading warrior was V.P. Singh. "Aur phir, Haryana me, jahan mujhe log tauji, tauji karke pukarte hain, main wahan tauji hi banke rehna chahta hoon. (Besides, I prefer to look after Haryana as an elder uncle.)" He proposed V.P. Singh's name for the leadership. He had barely stopped speaking when Ajit Singh loudly seconded him. There were no other nominations. Amid thunderous applause Dandavate declared Singh elected. The only undercurrent of turbulence was the shell-shocked look on Chandra Shekhar's face. Four hours later, President R. Venkataraman asked V.P. Singh to form a government and scheduled the swearing-in the following day.

—Inderjit Badhwar and Prabhu Chawla



SHARAD SAXENA

"Who dares oppose me? I am the Robin Hood of Bihar."

Laloo Yadav, Bihar chief minister, October 15, 1991

mingles in the crowd without a care. When the crowd chants, "Laloo kaka zindabad," he laughs. "They've increased my age. Earlier, I was Laloo bhaiyya." When he sees an elephant, Laloo steps down from his Garib Chetna Rath, climbs the animal and raises a lantern—his election symbol. The crowd is ecstatic. After nearly a decade at the helm, Laloo still remains the pivot around whom Bihar politics revolves.

—Saba Naqvi Bhaumik

ISSUE DATE **SEPTEMBER 27, 1999**

## THE 'ATAL' BIHARI

Laloo's rhetoric for poll '99 is solemn, fewer jokes. "Either the poor will survive or the rich. This isn't an election but war." The pitch: I'm the messiah of the poor who has given you a voice. The BJP-Janata

"Jantu (animal)" Dal is a gang of vested interests—"woh air-condition wale hai". It's easy to see why Laloo has such a rapport with people. He's one of them. In an age of high security, he





T.N.

## NINAN

*The author joined INDIA TODAY in April 1982 as business editor and was executive editor from May 1986 to August 1988. At present he is editor of Business Standard.*

INDIA TODAY ran a story on Maruti's potential foreign collaborators. Osamu Suzuki read the story and asked his officials: why aren't we in the race? And India's car revolution began.

# BUSINESS PRISM

**I**N the year that INDIA TODAY was born, I had been working for weeks on the racket that was Sanjay Gandhi's Maruti project. By the time the investigation was complete, the Emergency and press censorship had been imposed. So I sat on the story for 21 months, till censorship was lifted with the 1977 election. But now the newspaper I worked for wasn't interested in publishing on the subject. Determined to bring the facts to light, I offered the story to INDIA TODAY, which put it on the cover—and I was told circulation trebled with that issue.

After Indira Gandhi returned as prime minister and nationalised Maruti in order to revive her dead son's project, INDIA TODAY ran a story on the company's potential foreign collaborators. Osamu Suzuki was on a flight when he picked up a copy of INDIA TODAY from the inflight reading choice, came across the Maruti story and asked his officials: Why aren't we in the Indian race? One thing led to another, and Suzuki finally tied up with Maruti. India's car revolution began.

That's only one of the many ways in which INDIA TODAY's 25 years (including the six eventful ones I worked for it) have been a witness to India's contemporary business history. My first cover story, after joining the magazine in 1982, put Dhirubhai Ambani (among others) on the cover. Interviewing him was like being in a cage with a tiger. He was wary of your intentions. He nearly threw me out of his office at our first meeting because he didn't like the direction the questions were taking. Later, when V.P. Singh as finance minister

was going after Reliance and Dhirubhai had been incapacitated by a stroke, Mukesh Ambani came to the office to answer all the charges in his first interview. In his 20s, and visibly nervous, he did remarkably well in a long, taped session. Still, you couldn't have forecast then that this young man had it in him to set up one of the world's largest, most complex oil refineries at an absurdly low cost.

One of the big long-running stories of the day was Swraj Paul's covert stock market raid on Escorts and DCM. Paul got a bad press because it was generally suspected that he was riding on the back of political support, but he uttered a lot of home truths when he first disclosed (to INDIA TODAY, of course!) that he was the mystery raider. He talked of how businessmen lived in a style that couldn't possibly be supported by their official salaries, how managements should conduct themselves in the middle of a raid (no one in India had heard of the London City code till Paul talked of it), and so on. Well, now we do have a takeover code in India—one of the many ways in which Indian capitalism has matured. And today Paul would have to make an open offer to small shareholders under the takeover code.

Even in the mid-1980s, India was in a funny socialist mindset. If you did an upbeat story on the rise of India's middle class, most pundits simply rejected the good news, as though it was nothing more than boosterism. But there was an overwhelming response to a detailed report on government waste—except that nothing has changed in the 15 years since. Another

memorable cover story was on the mess that was India's telephone system. One of the editors had a brainwave for the cover visual: a battered phone instrument (it was banged on the floor till it broke!) bandaged clumsily and knotted up with wires. Today, we finally have a decent phone system, though it's still not world class.

Business journalism was still unformed back then. For instance, no one had heard of the reclusive Vittal Mallya (Vijay's father) till we put him on the cover as India's beer king and a man who had the foresight to buy up breweries as others sold them cheap in the wake of Morarji Desai's push for prohibition. And although we didn't write about him then, I remember an early conversation with Azim Premji, when he declared India's future was in software. This was the time when all the excitement was about computer hardware. Equally, many family businessmen who figured prominently in the business pages—the Modis, for instance—have disappeared into the wings because they couldn't read the tides of history.

Looking back, that history can be summed up as the slow discovery of the importance of markets, domestic and foreign. Remember that toilet soap prices were controlled by the government till around the time INDIA TODAY began publishing. No one would dream of such idiocy today. In 1982, Vasant Sathe had to lead an almighty battle to get colour television into the country. Today, meeting consumer aspirations seems the logical thing to do. Some of those changes explain why India's growth rate has nearly doubled since the 1970s.



25  
YEARS



SAIBAL DAS

"Beauty parlours are now as ubiquitous as paanwallahs."

India Today,

November 15, 1996

ISSUE DATE **NOVEMBER 15, 1996**

In today's quick-fix world, if you don't have it, you go out and buy it. Neuro-psychiatrist Dr Rajesh Parikh likens the brutality of the beauty culture to the "Chinese bound-feet syndrome". An entire industry thrives on it, but many see in it not just evidence of marketing imperialism, but an insidious form of social

control. "The message is that for women, self-worth is synonymous with looking good," says Anjali Monteiro, head of the audio-visual unit at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. "They become mere beautiful objects, assemblages of desirable body parts." —Anupama Chopra and Farah Baria

NAMAS BHOJANI



**WINDS OF CHANGE:** Blew even the sari into designer mode

# TRENDS

The past 25 years have changed the way India lives, thinks, plays and amuses itself

ISSUE DATE

**JANUARY 15, 1980**

Before the '80s could learn to pronounce boutique, swank little retail outlets had begun to mushroom countrywide, flamboyantly selling the 'look'. The real action in the fashion world took place in the metros, where the rich vied with each other over the cut and colour of salwar kameezes, the style and substance of payals. They were spurred on by *apna utsavs*, handicraft melas and trade fairs. Many variations of the salwar, the kurta and even the dupatta were stylishly worn. Even the seemingly prosaic sari underwent a transformation.

—Sharmila Chandra



RAGHU RAI



**FASHION FIXATION:** Suddenly haute became hot and every little girl wanted to be Miss Somebody





# TRENDS 25 YEARS

ISSUE DATE

DECEMBER 15, 1991

**A** halting, stuttering, revolution is upon us. A learn-by-night, practise-by-day revolution that is sweeping newly gentrified



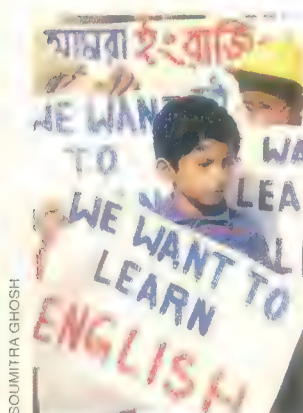
FUN: High life set the tone

HEMANT PITHWA

colonies—around two crore Indians with a single quest: to speak English.

Going by the most conservative estimates, there are over 150 institutes in Delhi alone that offer one-to-four month quick-fix courses after which you will ostensibly talk David Frost under the table. At any given time, there are about 25,000 hopefuls in the city trying to achieve that dream.

—Rahul Pathak and Vijay Kranti



SOMITRA GHOSH

**BACK TO BASICS:** Pressure from below forced politicians to abandon anti-English posturing

BHAWAN SINGH



ISSUE DATE **AUGUST 15, 1996**

**F**ighting fat was once a lonely job: you were either a sportsperson, or maybe just a little touched. Today, borne on the firm bodies flickering on TV screens, looking good is a middle-class obsession. The battle of the bulge today is more organised, more commercial and,

quite simply, a money spinner. Clinics across the nation offer easy ways to lose fat: heat machines that 'shake up' fat; 'herbal' medicines that promise sensational weight loss; and meagre diet packets that starve clients into slimmer personae. While clinics spend a great deal



**ME TOO:** Finally, paunches went out of fashion in India

of money on advertising tantalisingly quick ways to lose weight, little is done to validate these methods with scientific research in India. And the unregulated, frenetic growth of such centres is raising many uncomfortable questions.

—Subhadra Menon

ISSUE DATE **JANUARY 15, 1991**

**T**he temple of Lord Ganesha, an ornate and ancient structure, is almost silent. But the accompaniment for God's (and his) worship is a live star. Intertwined to dance. Flanked by two elephants, Hanuman and Ganesha—all in marble—and against a backdrop of red velvet, the three-foot high Rs 20,000 idol stands wearing a Rs 2,000 sari.

—Kumar Venkay with Vijay Mahapatra and Kavitha Shetty

**PAUL ROOMS:** The rich mingled faith with opulence.



“Cigars have one use that can't be replaced. When smoking with a girl, you can take off the band and slip it on her finger.”

*A cigar smoker,  
India Today, April 6, 1998*

BHAWAN SINGH

ISSUE DATE **APRIL 6, 1998**

**N**eed a lifestyle overhaul? Try a cigar. Try one even if life seems good: it could make you look more macho, successful, sexy. It's what everyone in town, from teen queens to eclectic politicians, seem to be sporting. It's the dawning of the cigar era in India.

—Namita Bhandare





ISSUE DATE **MAY 15, 1991**



ISSUE DATE

**OCTOBER 13, 1997**

**P**ssst ... it's everywhere. From Amritsar to Alapuzha, Kolhapur to Kohima, pornography is increasingly available. From storybooks in Telugu for Rs 20 to c-d-roms with bizarre sex that sell for Rs 2,000, India's most open secret has kept up with the times and shifted to overdrive.

—Sudeep Chakravarti

BANDEEP SINGH



**A**sexual glaze is breezing through, sending young clerks and receptionists out in pursuit of romance. It's romance on the sly. You won't find young couples sitting in family living rooms sipping cokes. Furtive twosomes crowd public beaches, occupy back rows of cinemas or sit long hours in fast food places. Cupid is now increasingly busy as permissiveness elbows aside tradition and fathers forget to lock up their daughters.

—Madhu Jain with M. Kishore



ISSUE DATE

**MAY 31, 1988**

**U**nlike the yuppie who is health conscious, the puppy loves his food and drink, and shows it all over. A group of puppies who frequent a health club every Sunday at a five-star hotel now use it for drinking sessions. This prompted the hotel to offer them a complimentary room where they spend their time topping up rather than toning up. So it is not surprising that the puppy likes to treat his car as a bar, and the plane as the Last Chance Saloon to get drunk in.

—Raminder Singh

ISSUE DATE **AUGUST 15, 1993**

**L**ife on Bombay's Shuklaji street, a part of the city's red light area, can get pretty rough. But 10-year-old Arjun, a rag-picker, couldn't care less. Unmindful of the sordid life he leads, he is on a perpetual high, often doing a little jig and breaking into song. The reason for his euphoria: a small tin of industrial glue which he sniffs from time to time.

Industrial glue, which contains potent hydrocarbons, is just one of the many new substances being abused by addicts seeking a cheaper high. In the list are cough syrups and tablets like cold medicine.

—Lekha Rattanani

DESIGNER DRUGS: Fad highs

BANDEEP SINGH

BANDEEP SINGH



**NIGHTMARE:** The less affluent middle classes were affected most by urban deterioration

RAGHU RAI



ISSUE DATE **NOVEMBER 15, 1983**

**T**he downgrading of the middle class is what urban anthropologists call "degeneration". Neela Falnikar, a corporator, gives an example of this. She says there is a popular misconception about slums like Dharavi being so prosperous that people living there possess TV sets and videos. "Look at it this way," she says, "it's not the slum dwellers who can afford TV sets but sections of the middle class who are being driven out to live in Dharavi."

—Sunil Sethi & Coomil Kapoor





PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

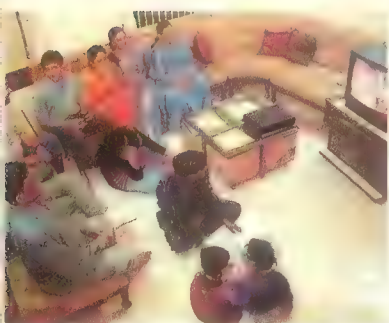
EPIC SAGA: The *Ramayana* TV serial enthralled India

ISSUE DATE

**OCTOBER 15, 1990**

**F**ive years ago there were barely 150 cable tv operators in the country, almost all of them in Bombay. Today the number has crossed 4,000. And though three-fourths of them are still in western India, they are quickly expanding operations to other parts. The story is much the same in dish antennae. In 1985, there were less than 5,000 in India. Today, the figure is at least five times higher and growing by 100 every month. The spread is particularly fast in smaller towns in the west and north.

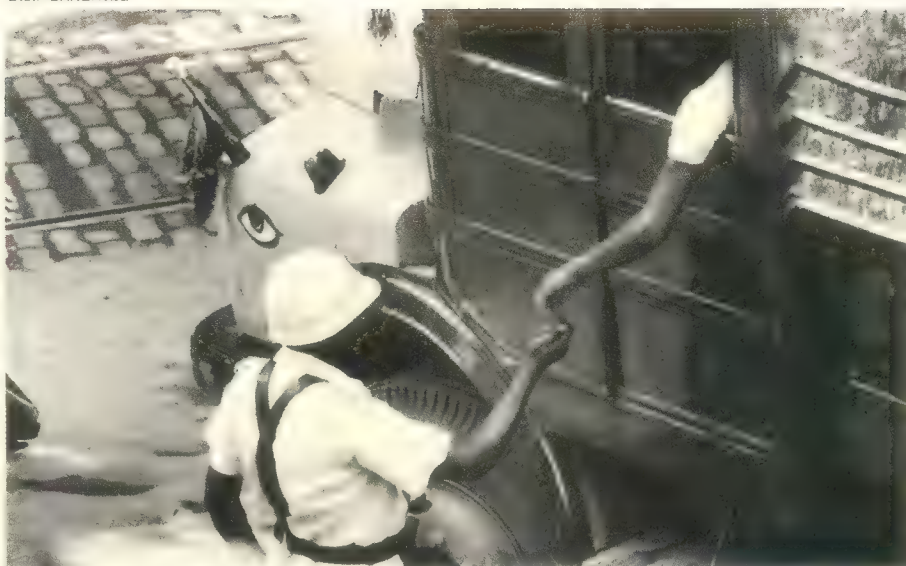
—Paranjy Guha Thakurta



SHAIKESH RAVAL

ADDICTION: Colour tv and cable changed family life

DILIP BANERJEE



ISSUE DATE **AUGUST 24, 1998**

Indians defecate everywhere," he wrote in his *Area of Darkness*. "they never look for cover." We hated Naipaul then, just as we loved his subsequent conversion to the idea of India. Indira Gandhi hated it when Louis Malle's *Phantom India* depicted the seamy underside of Indian democracy.

She banned the film. Earlier, we hated Katherine Mayo. We echoed Gandhi's distaste for a sanitary inspector's report. *Mera Bharat is mahan*. Yet, if the sanitary inspector is allowed to prepare a report on India 51 years after we came into our own, it would not be very flattering

—Swapan Dasgupta

ISSUE DATE **OCTOBER 15, 1995**

**I**did it myself, three times. I think this is God's way of proving His existence," said Parind Badshah. It was Miracle Thursday and outside Bombay's Siddhivinayak temple, a rope was the only barrier between Lord Ganesh and the faithfuls. Cries of "*Ganapati bappa morya*" drowned all other sounds as people rushed in carrying milk. Jaiprakash Pandey, priest of 25 years at

Bombay's Mahalaxmi temple, summed the day's happenings: "God has a message. He's saying, it is me." The questions linger. Was it an act of God that allowed idols to drink milk, or an act of faith that allowed millions to believe it was possible? Or was it an act of communication where a nation suddenly found a common bond?

—Arun Subramaniam  
with Anjan Mitra



SHARAD SAXENA

ISSUE DATE

**APRIL 16, 1980**

**I**f God came down from the heavens and asked Information and Broadcasting Minister Vasant Sathe what he wanted, the likely answer would be—colour tv. The media pundits, perhaps justifiably, are confused. From a state of relative slumber when television itself was considered a luxury, to such colourful hubbub is no mean transition.

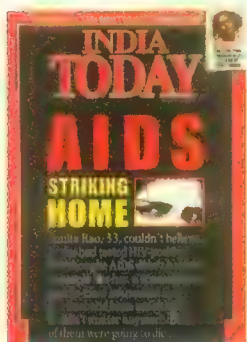
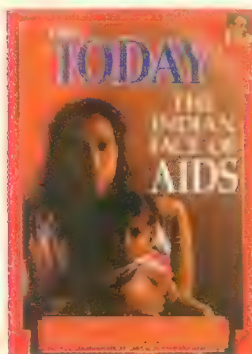


BHAVAN SINGH

But, said an amused official at the Information Ministry: "Just because the minister makes a statement, it does not mean that colour television is in. The whole idea was to generate a debate on the issue."

—Chitra Subramaniam





ISSUE DATE

**JUNE 30, 1994**

**I**t's a touchy topic. In Kanpur, Dr Saroj Malik couldn't include condom demonstration in the college campaign because of opposition by teachers. A rally of students on World AIDS Day in Ahmedabad last year proved a damp squib when students from the city's colleges refused to carry "dirty" placards. And in Bihar, youth officer D.N. Pathak admits: "With the social realities here we can't talk about sex in colleges."

—Charu Lata Joshi



SOMITRA GHOSH

**AIDS WIDOWS:** Wives of victims going to a temple

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



ISSUE DATE **SEPTEMBER 16, 1977**

**T**he drums have been beating loud and clear in villages and tiny hamlets across the country. Their message is ominous: Malaria is back.

It is ironic that only recently the same drums were sounding a welcome message—the eradication of smallpox. As a senior Health Ministry official ruefully remarked: "We came very close 10 years ago to eradicating malaria, but then the sky fell on us." That is why now, over two decades after the National Malaria Eradication Programme was launched, the drummers are

informing villagers where and how to get anti-malaria drugs and how to prevent the crafty Anopheles mosquito from breeding. From about one lakh cases reported in 1965, the number soared to over 51 lakh in 1975, and this year, it may well cross the one crore mark. Of course, it is still not as bad as the 1950s when, on an average, 75 million cases were recorded every year and eight lakh people died from the disease. The economic loss to the country was estimated at Rs 750 crore annually.

—Jitendra Tuli

ISSUE DATE **JUNE 15, 1993**

**I**t's one of those fragrant midsummer nights in the capital. The motia-scented air converses with the competing whiffs of Obsession and Kourous rising from the figures draped in various gradations of white. Linen, of course. It's white only for the Beautiful People these days. Out in the lawn in this God's little acre of Lutyens' Delhi, the industrialist with his Bally shoes incongruously jutting out from his carefully-creased white churidars asks the brand-new tycoon in blinding white: "Didn't see you at



Davos this year." Pat comes the response, after a gulp on his Bourbon-on-the-rocks: "I was held up in Washington. Had to meet this chap at the Pentagon." Inside, on the minimalist black-and-white sofa, the Peter Pan-ish editor of a daily waxes eloquent about Nouvelle Indian Cuisine, while the lis-some lady doctor, who's barely touched her *nimboo pani*, says she likes her asparagus in aspic and her politics saffron. These are the Khub-soorat Log, the snobs of the 1990s.

—Madhu Jain

ISSUE DATE  
**OCTOBER 15, 1987**



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

**R**esidents bridle at any suggestion that Ravi Karmve may have been forcibly hired. Says Tej Singh, a villager: "A woman is forced or if she tries to jump off the pole then she will not be considered a villager and no one will touch her. And besides, there are hundreds of widows here. Why were they not forced? She was a woman who believed her husband was a god and there could be no life for her without him."

—Indrajit Bhattacharya



# TRENDS 25 YEARS

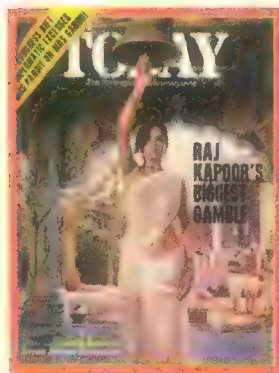


RAGHU RAI

**ALWAYS ON TOP:** The popularity of Kapoor's films endured

"Let people come to see Zeenat's tits, they'll go out remembering the film."

Raj Kapoor, on his film  
Satyam Shivam Sundaram,  
October 1, 1980



FAWZAN HUSAIN

ISSUE DATE | **MAY 1, 1980**

At any given time of day, over one lakh people are watching a tall, lanky, slightly gawky figure sing, dance and fight on the screen. Every year, approximately four crore people crowd the cinemas to watch this man battle evil, and one in every six Indians has seen one of his films. Each time he leaves his house in Bombay's Juhu, investments worth Rs 50 crore ride on him. So

**SUPERSTAR:** Bachchan is the star that never sets in India

much in demand is the dark, taciturn star that the hordes of producers who queue outside his dressing rooms are told they cannot expect shooting dates before 1983. And yet, the offers keep on coming. As French producer Alain Chamas, who tried unsuccessfully to sign him for *Crossings* opposite Jon Voight and Richard Dreyfus, remarked in exasperation: "This man is not just a star. Amitabh Bachchan is an industry."

—Vir Sanghvi  
and Zothanpari Hrahsei



NAMAS BHOUJANI

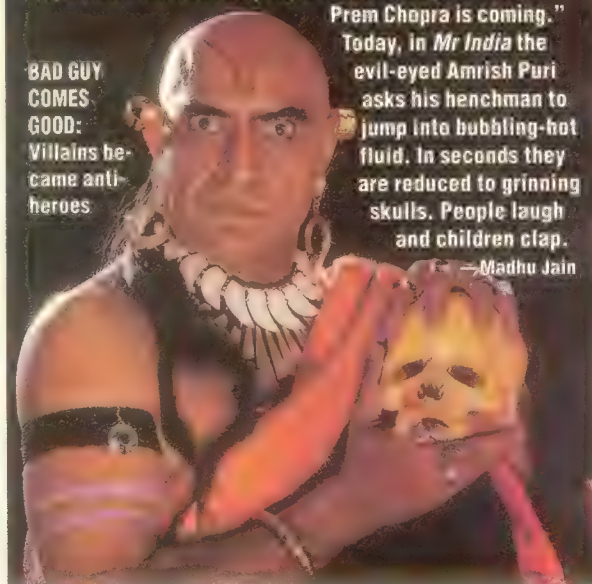
ISSUE DATE | **NOVEMBER 30, 1988**

A villain on screen was thought to be one off it too. Says Pran: "Nobody named their sons Pran in the 25 years I was a villain." When Prem Chopra, a screen rape specialist, walked the streets, people said: "Hide your wife,

**BAD GUY COMES GOOD:** Villains became anti-heroes

Prem Chopra is coming." Today, in *Mr India* the evil-eyed Amrish Puri asks his henchman to jump into bubbling-hot fluid. In seconds they are reduced to grinning skulls. People laugh and children clap.

—Madhu Jain



"An actor's popularity cannot be easily translated into electoral votes."

Amitabh Bachchan,  
May 1, 1980



ISSUE DATE | **MARCH 31, 1994**

You are not working with Hrishikesh Mukherjee. This is a Manmohan Desai film." It was the first day of my first film with Desai. In the long association that followed over 20 years there was never a doubt who the master was. To him it was cinema. A cinema which in its own words was "not going to be seen at Cannes but at Chinchpokli".

—Amitabh Bachchan



ISSUE DATE

**OCTOBER 1, 1977**



NAMAS BHOJANI

**ROOTS:** Naipaul in Bombay

**V.S. Naipaul** is now in a position to publish anything and this book is definitely "anything." For just as in successful films the formula is repeated to ensure outrage, controversy and therefore commercial success, Naipaul has likewise crammed *A Demonic Muse—India: A Wounded Civilisation* with the West's obsessions with India: defecation descriptions, native magic, child labour, human sacrifice, caste and more caste. —Madhu Trehan



**KING LEER:** Khushwant Singh has been called Delhi's best-known living monument

ISSUE DATE

**FEBRUARY 1, 1981**

The "masseur" of this all-pervading music, and the empress of India's immensely popular light music industry is a portly, camera shy, plain-as-Jane Marathi woman. Latabai Mangeshkar, who, as a playback singer, enjoys today a clout even movie moguls cannot dream of. One imperious frown from her sends the country's highest paid music directors in a panic. A single disapproving shake of her head makes the top brass of internationally connected record companies



**RECORD:** She used to sing 500 songs a year on average

grow cold feet. As Shanker of the famed Shanker-Jaikishan music director duo put it: "Lataji catches cold, and the whole film industry sneezes." —Sumit Mitra



**EVERYMAN'S HERO:** From poor man's Mithun to Hero No. 1

ISSUE DATE **JULY 28, 1997**

**Govinda** wants an Oscar. He says this without Gbatting an eyelid, a cheesy smile in place, in decidedly un-Oscarworthy surroundings. He is in drag—a pink satin dress with white crochet sleeves. Roses are sewn on to the bosom, sprinkled on the sleeves. Govinda's face is bright with pink lipstick. "I know, I know," he says. "People laugh. They say, 'he can't even speak English properly, what he'll win an Oscar?' But if from nothing I could become Govinda, from Govinda I can become something." —Anupama Chopra



ISSUE DATE

**MARCH 20, 2000**

There's something about the way which makes perfectly sane people go berserk. That they want to dance like fools, like putting powder under their palates so that they dream of life, every man want to be like that, young and full of life. —Anupama Chopra



HEMANT PITTHWA

"Govinda's career is a remarkable triumph of the will."

India Today,  
July 28, 1997





ISSUE DATE  
**FEBRUARY 16, 1979**

**T**he most important find of the season—perhaps of the decade (barring Gavaskar)—is Kapil Dev. At 20, the tall, broad-shouldered student from Haryana is India's first genuine fast bowling prospect since World War II. Properly harnessed, his speed could wreak havoc in England's moist atmosphere. His whirlwind batting, the most exciting thing to happen to Indian cricket since the days of Salim Durrani, is just what was needed to galvanize India's tortoise-like middle-order.

It is quite likely that Kapil Dev will, in the tradition of all-rounders such as Mike Proctor and Eddie Barlow, pay more attention ultimately to his batting than to his bowling.

—Minhaz Merchant

**PASSION:** Post-1983 cricket became a mass obsession



SAIBAL DAS



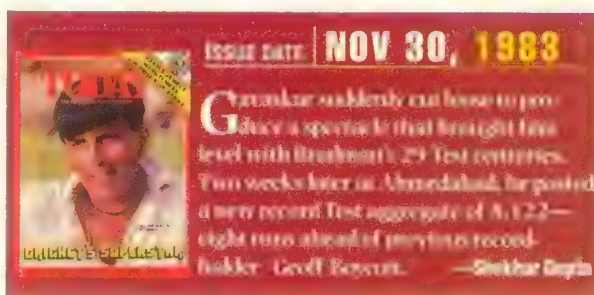
**LANDMARK:** Asiad 82 gave India colour TV and transformed Delhi

ISSUE DATE **DECEMBER 15, 1982**

**E**very once in a while an event occurs that lifts a nation above mediocrity. Last fortnight was undoubtedly India's turn when the curtain went up on the biggest sporting event in Asia. Even before the opening ceremony had ended, it was evident that this was destined to be India's hour. As a birthday gift to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, there could have been no better. And it was no less

than she deserved, if only for the fact that it was her gamble to go for the Games. The moment the Asiad flame burst into brilliance on the scheduled second in the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, all doubts and fears vanished into the winter air. By the time the games reached the half-way mark, it was obvious that it was to be a spectacular success.

—Dilip Bobb, Amarnath K. Menon and Sreekant Khandekar



ISSUE DATE **DECEMBER 7, 1998**

**T**here is a cost to genius. In his own restaurant Jordan must sit in his private dining room: Tendulkar dare not even go out to dine. People in India stand for

hours waiting for him; when he plays they switch on their TV sets and switch off their lives. It is hard for him. Says Tendulkar now: "People expect too much of me. A hundred every innings. They call and say, 'You scored a 100 in Kanpur, why not in Delhi?' They must accept my failures." But the reason for their extravagant demands is Tendulkar himself.

—Rohit Brijnath

**TIED:** Sachin and Anjali, 1995



ASHESH SHAH

ISSUE DATE  
**AUGUST 16, 1998**

**M**aybe Nostradamus, on a particularly receptive day, might have predicted that this buck-toothed girl in pigtails would become India's most celebrated sports-woman. But not even he would have believed that 20 years on, P.T. Usha would still be India's athletics sweetheart. Twenty years. Imagine that. At the ATF Championships in Japan last week, they couldn't. "This is the same Usha?" they asked. The disbelief was not unreasonable: for all her contemporaries—Lydia de Vega, Ashwini Nachappa, Shiny Abraham—the track is just a memory.

—Rupinder Singh

**MA COURAGE:** Usha showed it was possible



BHAWAN SINGH





SUNIL  
SETHI

The author was a  
correspondent for INDIA  
TODAY from December  
1975 to September 1985.  
At present he is an  
anchor with NDTV.

Aroon Purie  
wanted INDIA  
TODAY to be a  
stockpile of  
talent. From  
being utter non-  
entities we were  
overnight being  
quoted in *The  
Sunday Times*  
and *New Yorker*.

# FUN AND FURY

IT'S not easy to describe to new arrivals in the media nowadays what it was to be one of their tribe in December 1975—a life without computers, cell-phones and live cameras. Certainly not the consoling magic of the now ubiquitous credit card to tide you over, flat broke and 21, until the end of the month. Newsroom facilities taken as the norm today were unimaginable, undreamt of.

In a tiny office, narrower than a train compartment and partitioned off from a larger hall, were packed a few desks, half a dozen chairs, three trusty Remingtons and four novices with little or no background in journalism. We reported our own stories, edited each other's amateurish copy, sought contributions, read proofs and pasted up galleys, kindergarten style, with scissors and paste. Telephones were scarce and often dead. Making or receiving an outstation call was an achievement. From time to time, the telex machine would hiss and sputter to life, scattering reams of garbled copy in all-caps every which way. For conveniences—a cup of coffee or the loo—there was good old York's restaurant next door, a place of such dead-end gloom that the only time it brightened was during our boisterous news meetings. Outside, Mrs Gandhi's Emergency was in full swing: the press short-circuited, the country on tenterhooks and the world watching. That is how I remember the beginning—INDIA TODAY's first few months. Presiding over this shaky

skiff in stormy times was Madhu Trehan. But she soon became pregnant and decided to rejoin her husband in America. Into the breach stepped Aroon Purie. His arrival coincided with a happening so momentous that it changed the course of Indian politics and the media and marked us all, in different ways, for life. Mrs Gandhi lifted the Emergency and announced elections.

The elections of 1977 really made INDIA TODAY: it ushered in the magazine boom and created the new journalism. Aroon and Dilip Bobb laid out the page carrying Sanjay Gandhi's first interview after his defeat in Amethi. T.N. Ninan and the late Chand Joshi came in to write the Maruti factory exposes. Ajoy Bose and John Dayal published their investigations of Emergency excesses. Almost everyone who matters in Indian journalism—Suman Dubey, H.K. Dua, Vir Sanghvi—passed through that cramped office with contributions.

It came to a pass that when we moved into large premises, Jay Dubashi, the magazine's first business editor, used to joke that there were only two kinds of journalists in India—those that worked for INDIA TODAY and those that did not. Aroon Purie himself phrased it differently. He wanted, he said, INDIA TODAY to be a "stockpile of talent". From being utter non-entities we were overnight being quoted in *The Sunday Times* and the *New Yorker*.

E.M. Forster once said that the trouble with opportunities is that they are seldom punctual. In

retrospect, the punctuality of that moment never ceases to amaze me. Aroon Purie could have painlessly offloaded four light-headed youngsters, closed shop and gone back to being the trained accountant and excellent printer he was. (He always carried, in those days, a printer's eyeglass in his briefcase, and personally inspected every colour separation). Instead, he held the faith, powered by strong beliefs and inner hunches that continued to move him, right or wrong. Among his beliefs is to leaven fury with fun; at INDIA TODAY the hunt was always on for the "sexy story". This did not imply a pile-up of Miss Worlds. It meant readable copy, accurate, succinct and stylish, supported by muscular argument, gripping images, snappy headlines and captions.

Electronic speed is the essence of the new media, and it is said that the dominance of television will kill off print. This is a fraudulent assumption; in India, more so. The power of reinvention is at the core of all successful journalism, it is changeless. In print, radio or television, only the best newsrooms will survive. The underlying tenets of newsgathering, as in any business, do not change: competition is the spur, preparedness is all, and excellence is in the details. I am suspicious of nostalgia—it tends to cloud vision, disables purpose and smells of stale family jokes anyway. But this may be an apt moment to amend Wordsworth: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive. But to be young and at INDIA TODAY was very heaven."



25  
YEARS

# MONEY

The colour of money changed like never before. Businessmen moved from the rogues' gallery to the level of movie stars.

The Old Economy



RAGHU RAI

**BRICKS TO CLICKS:** The symbol of India's economic might has shifted from business houses like the Birlas (left) to the cyber sultans

"So long as we have the socialist outlook we will not have Indian MNCs."

J.R.D. Tata, Chairman, Tata Sons, February 28, 1990

and the New



NILANJAN DAS

## THE NEW ICONS

ISSUE DATE **MARCH 6, 2000**

When you meet a billionaire for the first time, you expect him to do something billionaireish. Like attending to his continuously buzzing cell-phones. Talking big ideas, big money. And displaying it through flashy cars and expensive clothes. But Azim Premji—estimated personal wealth \$35 billion,


or Rs 1,50,000 crore—does none of that. In fact the only power he emits is to the meaning of the term self-effacing. The chairman of Wipro Corporation is both embarrassed and dismissive of being rated among the five richest persons in the world and the richest Indian ever. Wipro shares with a face

value of Rs 2 touched Rs 9,600 last week

Though Premji may not be an icon of the new economy that's characterised by instant millionaires, he saw India's potential strength in IT much before others. Wipro's success brings out the fact that when there is transparency the market is willing to recognise it and pay for it. Says Shitin Desai, MD, DSP Merrill Lynch: "Wipro and Infosys inspire the kind of confidence a lot of traditional companies don't." —Rohit Saran



BHAWAN SINGH



MARCH 15, 1987

## RUINED

Rajinder Sethia, 39, the world's biggest bankrupt, has been reduced to the ranks of a common criminal, unable to even rustle up cash for his bail.

In a span of just 30 months, the Rs 750-crore Sethia empire had collapsed like a house of cards, his flagship, Esal Commodities, liquidated and its creditors, including three Indian banks, were baying for his blood.

—Prabhu Chawla



11 May, 1998. With cell-phone numbers touching a million, Indians are networked into a new lifestyle. Sealing a deal, fixing an appointment, landing a bargain or making an impression. All this while on the move.

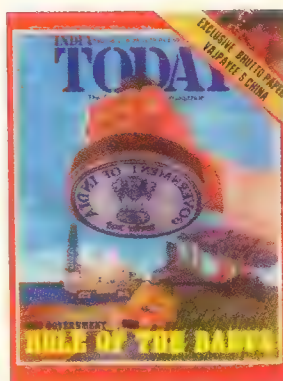
# BABU RAJ

ISSUE DATE

**FEBRUARY 16, 1979**

**P**owerful: If like Topsy, the government "just grewed", then like God, it is both omnipotent and omnipresent. It owns 65 per cent of the bread industry; 98 per cent of coal; 85 per cent of banking; 100 per cent of life insurance; and 32 per cent of bulk drugs.

Twenty-five years ago goods imported on account of the Government amounted to 27 per cent of the total. The state's share of exports has ballooned from 17 per cent to 36 per cent. The government is the rich-



est organisation in the country, it owns 70 per cent of all national wealth. And it is the richest manufacturer; from soft drinks to fertilisers, films to detonators, watches to cement, it produces them all.

As it grows in size and force, it feeds like some vast omnivorous parasite. Between 1951-52 and 1977-78 India's GNP was Rs 7,44,275 crore of which, going by a recent estimate, about

Rs 1,98,000 crore, or 27 per cent, was siphoned off as government expenditure. Out of this amount, Rs 1,21,000 crore was consumed by the sarkar for feeding the evergrowing ranks of babus and netas. Both these breeds of Indians have multiplied like mice. Government employees constitute the single largest workforce in this country. Out of every 10 employed Indians seven work in a government office. For every 60 kicking Indians there is one usually inert civil servant. The strength of the government—13 million at last count—has shot up by 300 per cent in the last 30 years. The government's policy of generating job opportunities without a corresponding increase in work is apparently responsible for escalating the number of babus.

—Jay Dubashi with  
Sunil Sethi and Prabhu Chawla

**"TISCO is already nationalised, technically speaking. I have 45 per cent, you have 4."** Biju Patnaik justifying the move to nationalise

TISCO on the grounds that the government, not the Tatas, was its majority share holder. June 16, 1979

# EXIT POLICY

ISSUE DATE

**DECEMBER 1, 1977**

**H**aving given marching orders to Coca-Cola and IBM within a week of one another, George Fernandes and his colleagues feel that they can handle multinational companies the same way they proposed dealing with Indira Gandhi, that is firmly and fearlessly. The MNCs may be giants in their own way, but in terms of their Indian operations they are very small indeed. The combined turnover of both Coke

and IBM is less than one half of 1 per cent of their global sales and this is true of virtually all except a couple of the largest foreign compa-



SHARAD SAXENA

**MNC GO HOME: George Fernandes lights up**

nies in India.

Fernandes has also said that the biggest MNC in the world is neither General Motors nor Exxon but the Communist Party with headquarters in Moscow and 100 per cent owned subsidiaries and "business" offices in every nook of the world including India. And the profits are tax-free with no limits on repatriation!

The communists themselves have a peculiar attraction for foreign MNCs or for that matter, local big business, the bigger the better. Almost the first thing E.M.S. Namboodiripad did after being installed as the first communist chief minister of Kerala in 1957 was to take the first plane to Calcutta and invite the Birlas to invest in his state.



## NUMBERS

### 1975-2000 FAST FORWARD

#### CAR MODELS

1976: **3**

2000: **74**

Delhi-Mumbai  
one-way airfare was  
Rs **440** in 1976.

Today the fare is  
Rs **5,110**

#### TELEPHONE LINES

1976: **16 lakh**

2000: **2.2 crore**

In 1976 there were  
**7.6 lakh TV sets** in  
India. The figure for  
the year 2000 is  
**3 crore**

#### RUPEE VALUE

1976: Rs **8.38/\$**

2000: Rs **46.76/\$\***

On Dec 12

#### PRICE OF GOLD

1976: Rs **554**

2000: Rs **4,550**

per 10 grams

Price of petrol in  
Delhi was Rs 3.39 a  
litre in 1976. Today  
it is Rs **28.70**

#### NO. OF LISTED COMPANIES

1976: **1,552**

2000: **5,819**

#### FOREIGN CURRENCY RESERVES

Nov 1976: **\$1.6 b**

Nov 2000: **\$35 b**



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

FOR 15 YEARS, the Maruti changed the country's lifestyle

## WHEELS TO THE NATION

ISSUE DATE **MAY 31, 1987**

What is small, shapely, reckless, hides behind dark glasses and raises people's blood pressure? No, not Lolita. The answer is Maruti, the peppy superbrat other car owners love to hate.

Already there are enough Maruti jokes to fill a book. Examples: what is common between a Maruti

and a haemorrhoid problem? The answer: sooner or later everyone gets it. Or, why is a Maruti like virginity? One bang and it's never the same again.

But on a more serious level, the ubiquitous Maruti is becoming the fast forerunner of changing attitudes, driving habits and even

lifestyles. It has established itself as the chief status symbol of the middle class. Nothing demonstrates the Maruti's effectiveness as a social symbol more than the story of a Karol Bagh chaat shop owner who was finding it difficult to get his son a proper bride. But no sooner had he bought him a new Maruti than he received a flood of marriage offers.

—Raminder Singh

“The rural consumer is ready to pay for quality products.” Vinod Dhawan, vice-president, Cadbury's, July 15, 1990

## COUNTRY FAIR

ISSUE DATE **JULY 15, 1990**

Protap Roy is senior vice-president, marketing, at Godrej Soaps. If you walk into his office these days, it's

HEMANT PITHWA

just possible he'll be muttering to himself, “India lives in its villages.” No, Roy is not about to discard his briefcase

for a jhola to walk into India's poor villages, spreading sweetness and light.

If villages excite him, it's for quite un-Gandhian reasons. They represent the hottest new market for Godrej's soaps; and by far, the fastest growing. Rural India buys an unbelievable 60 per cent of toilet soaps sold in the country. And the market is growing at 60 per cent a year. So if Roy says “Jai Kisan” with gusto, he has good reasons for doing so.

It isn't just soaps. India's villagers are getting hooked on to a whole range of goods—toothpaste, colour tvs, scooters, fans, fridges, air coolers, the works.

—Surajit Das Gupta and Kamesh Menon



RURAL DELIGHT: Firms realise India lives in its villages



# THE WEALTH MACHINE

ISSUE DATE | **JUNE 30, 1985**



Nirma's  
Karsanbhai Patel

RAGHU RAI

September 15, 1982.  
Nirma's phenomenal success is due to its price which at Rs 6 a kg is less than a third of Surf's Rs 20 a kg.

Reliance has proved to be the finest investment proposition ever seen by Indian investors. Anyone who invested Rs 1,000 in Reliance when it first offered shares to the public less than eight years ago has so far got Rs 3,937 in dividends alone, while the market value of his investment is more than Rs 50,000. Dhirubhai Ambani himself started with his first venture, the Reliance Commercial Corporates, 25 years



ago with a total capital of Rs 15,000. In 1967, he floated Reliance Textiles with Rs 15 lakh in the kitty. Today the market value of Reliance shares totals more than Rs 10,000 crore. And Ambani estimates his personal net worth at Rs 150 crore.

Reliance produces more cloth every day than any other textile company, and does it more profitably. It is the country's largest importer of synthetic yarn. Reliance is investing more money every day than any other private corporate entity. Projects under way involve an investment of Rs 675 crore, and all projects will be completed in two years, which makes for an investment of almost Rs 1 crore a day. —T.N. Ninan and Jagannath Dubashi

"I don't create waves. I ride them." Harshad Mehta, May 31, 1992

NAMAS BHOJANI



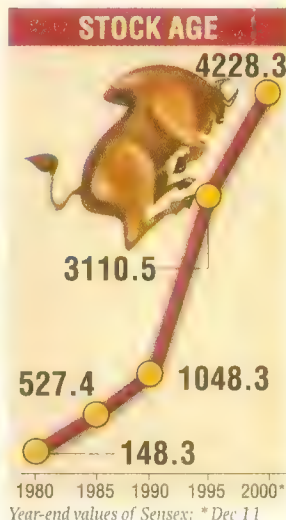
WHAT GOES UP: Mehta rose like a rocket and fell like a stone

ISSUE DATE | **MAY 31, 1992**

To us in the trading ring," says a Bombay broker, "he is Amitabh Bachchan." The biggest and the best at the game. And like the matinee idol, with a fancy house, fancy cars and even hordes of autograph-hunters. With a reach any broker would give his trading arm for: top

billing with the Ambanis, lunches with ITC Limited executives, a line into the CEO's suite of nearly all banks in India, and friendship with top industrialists. And an attitude that suggested a braggadocio.

Riding the market that saw the BSE index quadruple to 4,387 in the span of a year, Harshad Mehta's own portfolio gained in value by close to 10 times to nearly



Rs 2,000 crore.

But now that the game has come unstuck, it is becoming clear that the flamboyant 37-year-old Mehta is at the centre of the biggest financial and insider trading scam ever. In the past one year alone, the money involved could be as much as Rs 6,000 crore or more, taken from banks in various ways to play the booming stock markets. —Dakshesh Parikh and Lekha Rattanani

ISSUE DATE | **AUGUST 31, 1989**

## CORPORATE WARS

The arrest last fortnight of Nirmal Ambani of Reliance Industries, for example, led to a number of other firms' stock prices exploding. It was a well-timed move, shaking the judiciary, the bureaucracy, the corporate sector, and above all, the political establishment.

—M. Rajan

NAMAS BHOJANI

TARGET: Nirmal Wadia



May 15, 1994: Political parties are whistling in the dark. There are no guidelines from the government. Everybody is in doubt on GATT. Farmers like Tikait have added to the confusion and ignorance.

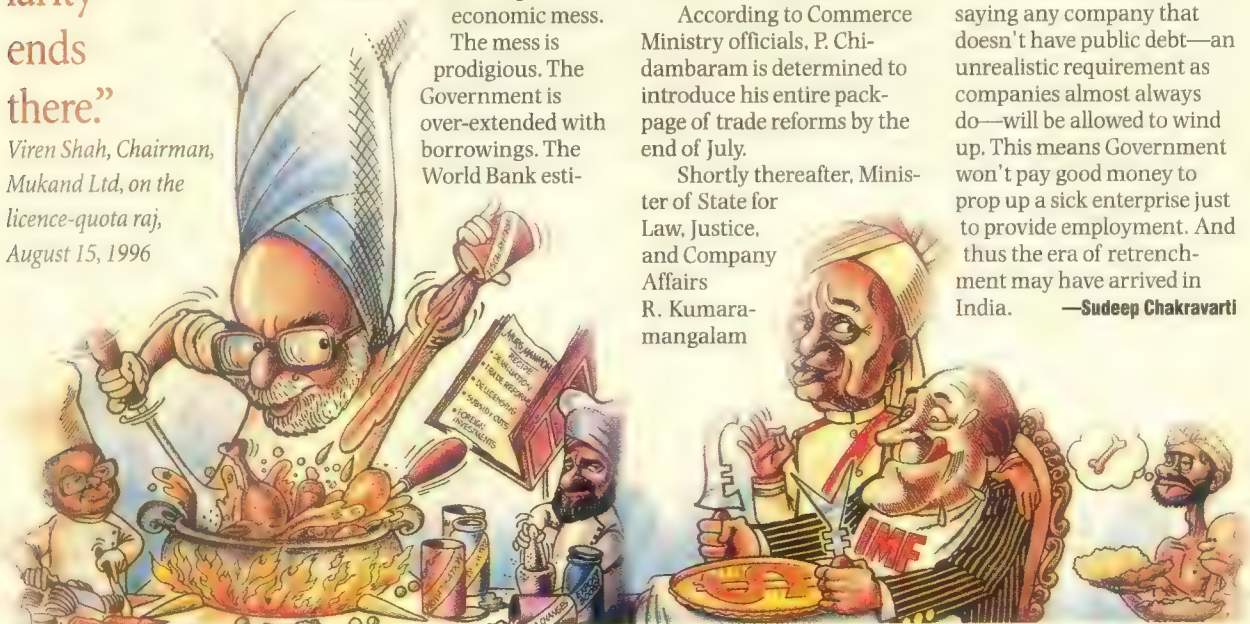


Mahendar  
Singh Tikait

PRASHANT PANJIAR

"Toyota and Hindustan Motors began operations in the same year. The similarity ends there."

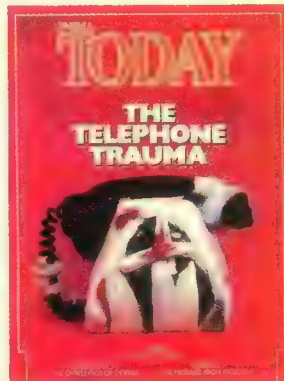
Viren Shah, Chairman, Mukand Ltd, on the licence-quota raj, August 15, 1996



## ELUSIVE RING

ISSUE DATE **AUGUST 15, 1983**

To have or not to have a telephone? That is not a silly question. For you could be like Debabrata Ghosh in Calcutta who says, "For seven months our phone was out of order and repeated complaints even to the general manager proved useless. We were paying the rental for an instrument which did not work." You could be in plain limbo like Prabir Bhambal in New



Delhi, who both had a phone and did not have one. The linesman cited a technical problem in giving Bhambal his allotted phone. After a month of principled waiting the problem disappeared at the hint of a tip.

It's not difficult to be in any of these situations, because that's how India's telephone system operates. Every 10th telephone subscriber has a complaint. And there are people who have been waiting for telephone for as many as 18 years; some of them will not get their connection for another five years.

—T.N. Ninan and Prabhu Chawla

## REFORM RAJ

ISSUE DATE  
**JULY 31, 1991**

Many people suggested that the IMF and not Manmohan Singh was the real agent of change. And hopes for a stable economic future were tempered by fears of hard times ahead. But nobody was willing to detract from the importance of what the man was trying to do: making a move to

clean up India's

economic mess. The mess is prodigious. The Government is over-extended with borrowings. The World Bank esti-

mates India owes the world \$70 billion (Rs 1,82,000 crore) at post-devaluation rates of exchange.

While trade with the world has increased, imports have too, outstripping exports by more than Rs 10,000 crore. The finance minister wants to end much of this. "I have the prime minister's mandate to think big," Singh told his bureaucrats. "The world must know India has changed."

According to Commerce Ministry officials, P. Chidambaram is determined to introduce his entire package of trade reforms by the end of July.

Shortly thereafter, Minister of State for Law, Justice, and Company Affairs R. Kumaramangalam

### INCOME GAINS

**Rs 1,065**



**Rs 14,682**



**1975-76**

**1998-99**

India's annual per capita income was talking about either restricting the MRTP Act or raising the asset limit for MRTP companies tenfold to Rs 1,000 crore.

And he made the first announcement on companies being permitted easy exits, saying any company that doesn't have public debt—an unrealistic requirement as companies almost always do—will be allowed to wind up. This means Government won't pay good money to prop up a sick enterprise just to provide employment. And thus the era of retrenchment may have arrived in India.

—Sudeep Chakravarti





**VIR  
SANGHVI**

*The author was a contributor for INDIA TODAY from 1976 to 1980. He is at present editor of The Hindustan Times.*

**I'm still nostalgic for the early days. When we were so young and naive that we thought we could change everything. And who is to say that we didn't?**

# GIFT OF THE GRAB

**L**ET me say this at the very beginning: the only reason I ever became a journalist was because of INDIA TODAY. And, for at least my first 10 years as editor, the one question I always asked myself when faced with a difficult situation was: how would Aroon Purie have handled it?

I owe INDIA TODAY and Aroon a huge debt. My connections with the magazine go back to the first months of its existence. My best friend's mother was head of marketing of Living Media. Asked to find articles, Mohini Bhullar, my friend's mother, drafted her son and his gang. I was among this motley collection of contributors.

I was 19 then and enjoying my year off before going up to university in England. AS INDIA TODAY had no staff in Mumbai and paid ridiculous rates for freelance contributions, the magazine recognised the advantage of using enthusiastic kids like myself.

For me the biggest bonus was the absence of hierarchy. As there was hardly anybody else doing stories, I could do anything and everything. One day I would take the train to Chembur to interview Raj Kapoor; the following day I would be sitting in the chief minister's chamber. From Parveen Babi to Amitabh Bachchan to George Harrison to Dhruv-bhai Ambani to Rajni Patel. I interviewed them all.

In October 1976, I went up to Oxford. But I loved writing so much that I came back during every vacation. From 1977 to 1980, I wrote five cover stories and probably 40 other stories.

What made me do it? Why did I rush back to Mumbai every vacation? The answer is I began to love working for INDIA TODAY. The

writing came easily (journalistic standards were not so high those days), the stories were fun, I could write my own ticket and—this was the clincher—I discovered journalism gave you the right to meet anybody you wanted and to ask them whatever you liked.

AS INDIA TODAY grew more comfortable with me, my role expanded. In Delhi, I would visit the small office where it would be put together by a hard core of Dilip Bobb, Shirley Joshua and Sherry Purie. But the star, whom we all deferred to, was Sunil Sethi, who was then—as he is now—the finest feature writer in India.

One of the great untold stories of Indian journalism is how Aroon—a chartered accountant—decided he was going to produce India's best magazine. Because he hadn't come up the journalistic ladder and as most of us on his staff were journalistic virgins, there were no preconceptions to overcome. Instead, Aroon looked to international journalism for his reference points.

All stories had to be properly sourced; facts and (especially) figures had to be included; all quotes must be credited; copy must include description and colour; all allegations must be referred back to the victim; and nobody should ever be able to say that a story was planted.

These principles stood us in good stead when the Emergency was lifted and INDIA TODAY went to town with a series of cover stories on what really happened in those 18 months. At a time, when everybody had an angle, only INDIA TODAY seemed to tell it like it was.

In the Janata period, as a new political crisis erupted each day, the magazine grew

in strength. In those three years—1977-1980—INDIA TODAY changed many of the rules of Indian journalism. It showed it was possible to write on commercial cinema without being gossipy. Under Jay Dubashi, it began a new kind of business journalism (though it took T.N. Ninan in the 1980s to perfect the form). It invented the magazine-style, narrative political story. And it raised Indian journalism to a new level of professionalism.

Some of it was because we were in the right place at the right time. Some of it was because we were so young. But most of it was due to Aroon. He cared for standards, he was willing to innovate and he took risks.

I remember the tension in the office in the winter of 1979. Aroon had commissioned an election survey from Prannoy Roy and Ashok Lahiri. Roy and Lahiri concluded Mrs Gandhi would win by a landslide.

Not one journalist in Delhi agreed with this view. Worse, they made fun of the inexperience of Roy. Lahiri and—let's face it—INDIA TODAY. Well-meaning souls told Aroon to bury the poll.

"No," he said, "we've commissioned it and we'll go with it." We did. And, of course, the poll was spot on.

From then on, there was no looking back. In the spring of 1980—by which stage I was editor of *Bombay*, a sister publication—Suman Dubey came on board along with Raghu Rai and INDIA TODAY became the behemoth that we know today.

But me, I'm still nostalgic for the early days. When we were so young and naive that we thought we could change everything.

And who is to say that we didn't?



# SCOOPS & COUPS

Over a quarter century, **INDIA TODAY** exclusives have brought down a Union government, sent politicians into a tizzy, evoked emotion in the most stoic reader. A collection, obviously not exhaustive, of the articles that didn't just report news—but also made news.

**Perspective:** Exclusive extracts from Henry Kissinger's *White House Years*.



ISSUE DATE  
**OCTOBER 15, 1979**

**E**xtract: "In May 1971 we learned from sources heretofore reliable that Mrs Gandhi had ordered plans for a lightning 'Israeli-type' attack to take over East Pakistan. And we had hard evidence that India was moving combat troops to the border."

**Perspective:** Nothing symbolises the subjugation of women more than female infanticide. Among Tamil Nadu's Usilampatti Kallar community it was the means to escape dowry; 80 per cent of female babies were killed each year.

**Perspective:** An earlier issue, March 15, 1983, brought to the world the images of the Nellie massacre. This issue revealed how an election-obsessed government had ignored warnings.

ISSUE DATE  
**MAY 15, 1983**

**T**he stage for a total breakdown, for a war of all against all, began to be set the moment it became clear that Mrs Gandhi had set her mind on elections. In the forenoon of February 18,

BHAWAN SINGH



1,383 men, women and children were butchered in and around Nellie ... The terrible fact is that the police had not just general but specific warnings. On February 14, the DC at Nowgong sent a message specifically to the sub-deputy collector stationed at Jagiroad (in whose jurisdiction Nellie, etc, lay): "You should keep watch over the communal situation in your area sply after the poll today(.) In case of any communal flares up immed, and strong action ..." But the leadership of the (police) force had been told again and again that their first task was to protect the personnel who were said to be doing election duty. —Arun Shourie

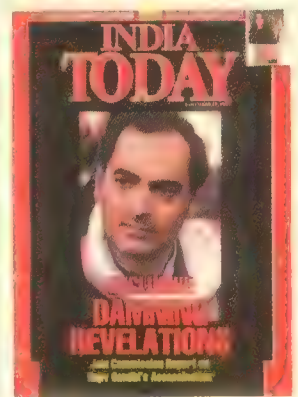
ISSUE DATE  
**JUNE 15, 1986**

**T**here was only one way out of a lifetime burden of bringing up daughters. That evening Kuppaswamy trudged into a nearby field, plucked a handful of olean-

der berries that are known for their lethal poison, and returned home. Chinnammal mashed them into a milky paste and fed her crying infant ... Within an hour the baby began to twitch and tremble fitfully.

She started spouting blood through her mouth and nose. A few more minutes, and all was quiet.

—S.H. Venkatramani



**Perspective:** After the Jain report, the Congress pulled down the Gujral regime.

ISSUE DATE  
**NOVEMBER 17, 1997**

**T**he inquiry into Rajiv Gandhi's killing indicts the DMK for colluding with the LTTE. Its disclosures could endanger the fragile Congress-UP relationship. Jain has recorded vivid details of the LTTE's free access to Karunanidhi. —Prabhu Chawla



# SCOOPS & COUPS

## 25 YEARS

**Perspective:** It began as a story on the nouveau riche but ended up coining a neologism. An article that contributed to (Indian) English.

ISSUE DATE

**MAY 31, 1988**

Delhi's *desi* contribution to the social lexicon is the 'PUPPY': prosperous urban Punjabi who is young. They epitomise Delhi's nouveau riche Punjabi culture: garish, status conscious and vulgarly mercenary. Already puppy jokes are doing the rounds. What's an ideal puppy marriage? Marrying the video and asking for the bride in dowry ... The urge to keep up with the Jonejas fuels some wild flights of fancy. All puppies are driven by the desire to be regarded as top dog. —Ramindar Singh

ISSUE DATE

**MAY 15, 1984**



**Perspective:** The ISI's secret war with India was laid bare and, to a degree, predicted.

The proxy war is now entering the home stretch. The newest battleground is Uttar Pradesh. Across its border, Nepalese authorities have informed India that Afghan "students" and Indians have been getting arms training. —Shekhar Gupta and Rahul Pathak

**Perspective:**

Posing as an emigrant, an INDIA TODAY correspondent infiltrated the south Asian-run networks that illegally take Indians to the UK.

ISSUE DATE **JUNE 15, 1995**

Finding an agent to transport me illegally from Belgium was simpler than trying to get in with valid papers. Once a contact in England has agreed to pay £2,000 on your arrival, all you have to do is put yourself in the hands of one of the agents, get into a lorry packed with other illegals and sail across one of the border ports. As Ram Avtar Rana, one of the agents, explained, "Don't worry. In the last five years, only one lorry was apprehended." —Harinder Baweja



**Perspective:** In 1987, the IPKF was sent to Sri Lanka. In Jaffna, it was surprised by the LTTE. Despatches and pictures from the Tiger den.

ISSUE DATE

**NOVEMBER 15, 1987**

Spending five days with the Tigers at the height of the battle, I saw one LTTE guerrilla, shot in the stomach, calmly swallow a cyanide capsule rather than hold up his companions in the battlefield ... At Kokuvil. I arrived barely minutes after the action, in time to witness a sight I hope never to see again—Tiger guerrillas, barefoot and in shorts, cutting down the two remaining Indian soldiers in a hail of gunfire. —Shyam Tekwani

**Perspective:** Prior to the general election, the Congress government planted stories in friendly newspapers about V.P. Singh's slush account in St Kitts. The documents proved to be forged.

ISSUE DATE **SEPTEMBER 15, 1989**

The 'exposures' first appeared in the *Arab Times*, a newspaper published in Kuwait where strict press censorship does not encourage investigative reporting. The so-called exposures did show signs of being the handiwork of the ruling party's Dirty Tricks Department. The *Arab Times* also sent a correspondent to Delhi, a Ms Porter. She arrived on a tourist visa on the day the story first appeared armed with copies of the newspaper. She immediately made contact with Minister of State in the PMO, Sheila Dixit. And according to her, she was contacted later on by the Government's PIO Ram Mohan Rao. The next day, the *Arab Times* story was picked up by the Indian press. —Prabhu Chawla

**Perspective:** India had spent Rs 3,000 crore on family planning in 1978-87—three times the outlay in 1947-77. Population still galloped. Why?

ISSUE DATE

**OCTOBER 31, 1988**

At the Vehendo primary health centre, 60 km from Lucknow. Chotelal, 80, and his son Lakshman, 40, underwent vasectomy operations recently. Both for the second time! Chotelal couldn't remember when he had his first operation, Lakshman, a father of five, had his in 1976. They did it again for the money, Rs 180, the government pays to those vasectomised. At the national level, these cases will be added to the Union Government's burgeoning list of "fresh acceptors" of contraceptive practices or, to use bureaucratic jargon, those "protected against pregnancy". —Raj Chengappa



**Perspective:**

Former coas General K. Sundarji's interview put Rajiv Gandhi deeper into the Bofors swamp.

ISSUE DATE **SEPTEMBER 15, 1987**

I was asked for my opinion on cancelling the Bofors contract. I (said) I believed if we threatened to cancel ... there was a 99.9 per cent chance Bofors would cough up the information." —in an interview to Ramindar Singh



SHYAM TEKWANI



25  
YEARS

# EYECATCHERS

1975-2000



ISSUE DATE | **SEPTEMBER 15, 1982**

Stars and scribes have pulled out their knives again. When Bombay-based film magazine *Cine Blitz* claimed that Shah Rukh Khan and co-star Deepa Sahi met the night before a shoot for *Maya Memsahib* "to conduct a trial" of the love scene, the actor was apoplectic with rage. After Khan threatened "to shoot the staff", editor Rita Mehta complained to the police and the star was arrested though he was released later. They always said his looks were arresting but they didn't have to go his far.

ISSUE DATE

**MAY 15, 1989**

A puzzling—and sizzling—guessing game may well be over. The "proud" father of Masaba, Neena Gupta's African princess, is—if the sensation-struck Caribbean newspapers are to be believed—West Indies cricket captain Viv Richards. The king's name on Masaba's birth certificate has been splashed all over the West Indian tabloids. For Richards and wife Miriam it's "no comments". The Antiguaners are not talking about their hero's secret. And for Neena, of course, mum's still the word. Howzzatt!



ISSUE DATE

**SEPTEMBER 15, 1992**

Is that...? No, it can't be. Goodness, that is Amitabh Bachchan. But why was he hiding behind a snow white beard when he walked into Rashtrapati Bhavan for the release of Sonia Gandhi's *Rajiv*. The actor's explanation for his black mop and white beard: "I had a rash. Now that's gone, so has the beard." That's the story—in black and white.



ISSUE DATE

**MARCH 1, 1977**

The Bombay film industry's femme fatale, Hema Malini, alias Miss Idli, was swinging down the lobby of the Oberoi Intercontinental in Delhi in a white crumpled pant suit, circa 1962. She'd just finished shooting a scene with Amitabh Bachchan in which he presents her a bracelet and they both sit down and have coffee. That kind of thing Hema Malini is pretty adept at. When an *INDIA TODAY* reporter approached her for an interview she mumbled back saying, "Wait". Both Amitabh and Shashi Kapoor had readily agreed to be interviewed a few minutes earlier. But not Hema Malini. The reporter waited, watching Hema patting her wig and her pant suit, and then went up again. "Later," she said laconically, being a woman of few words. The way she said it our reporter could have sworn she said "letter".



ISSUE DATE

**FEBRUARY 28, 1986**

If Naseeruddin Shah occasionally develops an Oedipus complex and Shabana Azmi ventures into the Caucasian Chalk Circle, can Smita Patil be far behind? Patil launched her very own play in Bombay's Prithvi Theatre last fortnight, titled *Aap Ki Farmaish*. The play, of course, has nothing to do with Jhumritalaiya—or even Vividh Bharati. It is Alyque Padamsee's adaptation of German playwright Franz Xavier Kroetz's *Request Concert*, and is all about the humdrum existence of a middle-class housewife. "I had the guts to take up this play because it is totally experimental theatre," says Patil, who did on stage what she's already done on screen—playing an ordinary, next-door Plain Jane.





# EYECATCHERS

## 25 YEARS

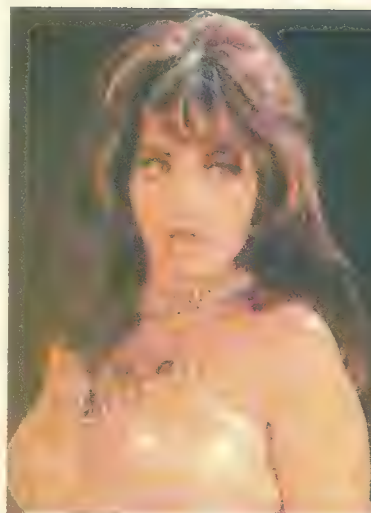
ISSUE DATE

**FEBRUARY 16, 1991**

**L**ending glamour to the otherwise staid centenary celebrations of St Stephen's College was the literally towering presence of Kabir Bedi, one of the few Indian actors who have made a dent in the international film world. The college, which unabashedly styles itself as



the Cambridge of the East, had specially invited Bedi to discourse on "What it means to be a Stephanian". But as Bedi told INDIA TODAY: "I am a breakaway from the Stephanian mould." Which he felt inevitably set students off on the well-trodden path of civil servants or business executives.



ISSUE DATE **APRIL 15, 1994**

**B**eing bad is now good. After Shah Rukh Khan's success as a psycho-killer in *Baazigar*, the latest player to join the game is the simpering Sridevi. Only this time the normally treachery-sweet actress plays the super-bitch. Sheetal, in *Laadla*, her latest film, "Nasty, nasty, nasty". Sheetal is the country's top industrialist given to slapping her manager and being vicious. Sridevi says, "It was fun. I have nothing against negative roles but I don't want to repeat it." Of course, *Laadla*'s end has Sheetal repenting. But as Sridevi says: "This was a film for the masses. It had to end like this." Especially for her to remain Bollywood's *laadli*.

ISSUE DATE **NOVEMBER 15, 1988**

**L**ike mother like daughter. Since she got back from Los Angeles, Pooja Bedi, the daughter of Protima and Kabir Bedi, has been painting Bombay red—with her umpteen *affaires de coeur*. Now the vivacious 18-year-old is making her first film *Vishkanya* where the pretty young thing will physically take on the villain. A surprise role for a would-be stockbroker, had mommy had her way.



ISSUE DATE **JUNE 16, 1979**

**J**et-setting Sindhi millionairess Bina Shivdasani, who was shown out of Ascot for appearing in a micro-mini (and letting her frilly panties show) has married Nicolo, a genuine Italian count. Gulu Lalvani—who made a bid to fame by escorting Miss World Reita Faria all over London in his Rolls Royce—rented a yacht and the gang floated down the Thames, to music by Studio 54, flown in from New York by ex-model Bina Ramani.

ISSUE DATE **JANUARY 1, 1978**

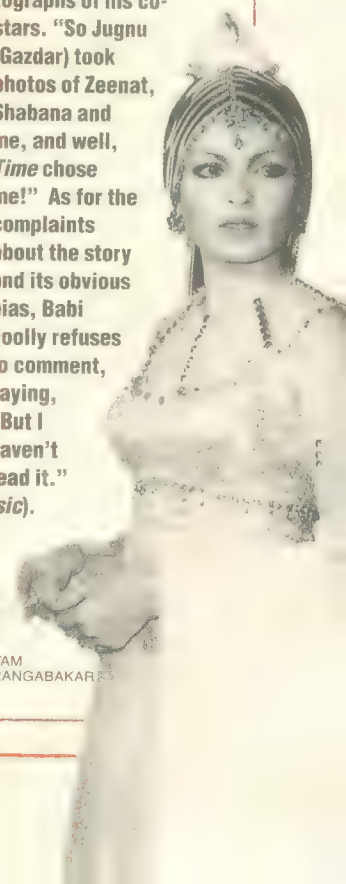
**F**rom the world of show-biz the one actress who showed the most and yet compromised the least was Zeenat Aman. And while the rest of the heroines worried about how they would be placed in the great mammary race, one starlet actually went in for a well-publicised operation to reduce her bustline by ten fullsome inches—yes, I am referring to Katy Mirza of the mammoth mammary fame. She emerged from "Operation Bust" slimmer, lighter and with a big load off her chest.

ISSUE DATE

**OCTOBER 1, 1976**

**S**weetheart, I didn't really try for the *Time* cover, these things just happen to me," purred Parveen Babi somewhat complacently. Babi's story is that she wasn't even interviewed and that she was photographed only because the story was originally going to be about Shashi, and *Time* asked for photographs of his co-stars. "So Jugnu (Gazdar) took photos of Zeenat, Shabana and me, and well, *Time* chose me!" As for the complaints about the story and its obvious bias, Babi coolly refuses to comment, saying, "But I haven't read it." (sic).

SHYAM  
AURANGABAKAR





# EYECATCHERS

25  
YEARS

ISSUE DATE **OCTOBER 16, 1980**

Meena Mehra, the wife of whom actor Vinod Mehra abandoned for actress Bindiya Goswami, has filed a suit for divorce. Meena claimed that Mehra earned between Rs 60 lakh and Rs 80 lakh yearly and demanded a maintenance of Rs 6 lakh per year in addition to a flat and car. Mehra insisted he earned Rs 40,000 per year, and offered to pay her Rs 1,000 a month. The judge ordered an interim maintenance of Rs 1.8 lakh. The hearings have been livened by Mehra's claim he knows nothing of Goswami beyond the fact that she is a budding actress.

SHYAM AURANGABAKAR



ISSUE DATE **SEPTEMBER 30, 1994**

Jaws didn't exactly sag with surprise. When *Gentleman* ran a cover story on the worst dressed men in India, based on a poll, the top three offenders were predictable—Bappi Lahiri, Govinda and Baba Sehgal. Lahiri, who is infamous for his dress sense, often decked up like an overstuffed Christmas tree—with more junk jewellery on him than his considerable body weight—was the hands down winner.



ISSUE DATE **NOVEMBER 30, 1985**

What happened to the *bavi* who took the first flight to LA and landed a *Star Trek* and a strange shave? Persis Khambatta is back with a new haircut and assignment. "I was really missing home... Some things you wish for subconsciously ... and my dream came true," says the aspiring Hindi actress. It began with a phone call from Nari Hira saying "Persis, I've got this film and you're just right for the role." And down she dashed within three days right into the thick of *Shingora*, a video film co-starring Marc Zuber. "This time I am definitely going to find a place in Hindi films," gushed Persis.



ISSUE DATE **AUGUST 15, 1985**

Sunday mornings have become the time to damn the Staximen and wham the postmen. The angry young woman is Priya Tendulkar. 27, who as Rajani has become the country's best-known middle-class housewife. Rajani is no libberti-gibberti, she's the whirl-stir-get-lost-sir kind of lady sticking her nose into everyone else's business. Last fortnight, Rajani heated up gas cylinder men to boiling point and drove taxi drivers round the bend. Over 1,000 taximen gheraoed Bombay DD saying Rajani had given them a bad name. Said an unperturbed Priya: "I do what I'm asked to do. I'm not involved with the ethics of the role."



ISSUE DATE **JUNE 1, 1978**

While most people find it hard to reconcile the image of a wild girl streaking down Juhu to that of a dedicated Odissi dancer, Protima Bedi sees no reason for surprise. "It's just that there are so many different people within me. They are all getting a chance. First I was recognised as Kabir Bedi's wife, then I.S. Johar's wife and now as an Odissi dancer."

Protima, in Delhi for a dance performance, said: "I was disappointed by the response. Art should not have politics. In Delhi this is so strong." What does she think of dancing? "It's like running into a nice looking man. You decide this is it. Love at first sight." What next? "I'm coming back to model bikinis. It's funny that one has to shed nice clothes in order to wear the traditional garb."





# EYECATCHERS

25  
YEARS



ISSUE DATE

**JUNE 1, 1977**

Democracy is an alien concept in India. The elections have proved men don't like to have their things cut off." Thus spake Sasthi Brata, Indian writer possessed of a British accent and passport. All of five feet nothing, a goatee bobbing up and down, a white suit, purple socks, high-soled shoes in red and black completed the picture of what seems nothing more than an Indian string-puppet in motion.

ISSUE DATE

**FEBRUARY 15, 1983**

Nobody is sure if it is Lallu or Kallu. At least not Shubhra Mukherjee, their mistress and the singer-wife of Pranab Mukherjee, the Union Finance Minister. But one of two pets, one a white Labrador with a suspect pedigree and the other a pie-dog the colour of stale tea,



jumped its leash and attacked a gentleman on a morning walk down Jantar Mantar. Lallu didn't approve of Lolly, the Lhasa that trotted with the man. The master of Lolly was none other than Atal Bihari Vajpayee, BJP president. As Vajpayee tried to parry the canine onslaught, the highly motivated Lallu dug his teeth into his finger, slicing off the flesh half-an-inch deep.

ISSUE DATE

**NOVEMBER 30, 1989**

They call her the Andhra *Abhinava Rudramma*—the legendary queen who led troops to battle. And not for nothing. Telugu Desam MP, Renuka Chowdhury, 35, faces charges of punching a constable's nose bloody—when he



intervened in a clash between Telugu Desam and Congress (I) workers. The fiery Renuka was leading a battalion of Telugu Desam "yellow shirts", the party's goon squad. But the police, their nose out of joint, were not amused and charged her with assault. Retorted Renuka: "Isn't it an insult that the man I punched survives?"



ISSUE DATE

**JUNE 15, 1986**



BHAWAN SINGH

To the slumdwellers of Sanjay Gandhi Nagar in Bombay, even the shock of eviction paled in comparison. She seemed to have walked out of one of the hoardings. But this role was for real: Shabana Azmi was fighting for the squatters. She rolled up her jeans, courted arrest with Om Puri, and Govind Nihalani and went on an indefinite fast. Said Shabana: "They were fighting for survival." Victory wasn't long in coming. On the fourth day, the state accepted the demand. The story had a perfect film ending.

NAMAS BHOJANI

ISSUE DATE

**DECEMBER 1, 1976**

In a turquoise blue chiffon sari, shoulder length black hair framing an exquisite face, Shobha Kilachand, editor of *Stardust*, looked as if she had stepped out a page of a fashion magazine. An eloquent talker who liberally intersperses her conversation with four letter words, she purred, "Film magazines are treated like bastard children of journalism."

"I don't give a damn who is sleeping with whom, but our readers, the affluent, sophisticated upper middle class do." Confessing her job demanded no mental exertion, she quipped, "Why should everything be intellectual?"

ISSUE DATE **AUGUST 31, 1984**

Is Zeenat Aman getting married or is she not? Last fortnight, the air was rife with rumours that Pakistan's dashing cricket hero Imran Khan had popped the question to his lady love and his lady love had gushed, "I will". But instead of a wedding came a lull. When Khan and Aman decided on a lips sealed response, their mothers decided to move in. Imran's mama issued a statement that her son had not proposed to Zeenie and Mrs Heinz, the lady's mother, insisted that her baby was "not, repeat not, getting married to anyone for some time to come." An abrupt end of an affair, there.





# EYECATCHERS

## 25 YEARS

BIPIN MISTRY



ISSUE DATE

**MAY 16, 1980**

**K**apil Dev, the 21-year-old blue-eyed boy of Indian cricket, is set to become a groom—leaving many a heart broken. Clad in a pink salwar-kameez, Ramani Bhatia (Romi), also 21, sat coyly beside her betrothed who did not even know if she was from Delhi or Bombay.

ISSUE DATE **APRIL 30, 1985**

**I**n 1971, when Leela Naidu quit films a day before her marriage to poet Dom Moraes, everyone thought—for better or for verse—she'd never come back. A decade-and-a-half later, Dom-struck Leela has returned, and as she says, "It's a breeze." She will play the central character in Shyam Benegal's latest film. "I have matured a lot as an actress," said Leela, once considered among the five most-beautiful women in the world. "and it's so much more fun than before." Seems like Leela is going to continue sitting pretty for a long time now.



ISSUE DATE **NOVEMBER 30, 1992**

**T**he dazzler that had the glitterati gasping was the brilliant gold breastplate. As Shyamolie Verma, Noina Chatterjee and Meher Jessica swirled and twirled to reveal the bizarre Cleopatra like bustiers, the crowd's jaws dropped. With it, the greenbacks began to shine in designer Suneet Verma's eyes. He wowed Delhi's staid audiences. He even had Bombay's Beautiful People clamouring for the Rs 2,500 breastplate.

FAWZAN HUSAIN



SHANKAR



ISSUE DATE **NOVEMBER 30, 1998**

**Y**ou could call it the war of the babes," says Nina Pillai. Babe No. 1: Anuradha Mahindra, editor of *Verve* and wife of tycoon Anand Mahindra. Babe No. 2: Pillai, savvy socialite widow of Rajan Pillai. The first shot was fired by *Verve* in which Pillai was described as "absolutely kitsch" along with "Chinese bhelpuri and Saigal's remixes". The fuming femme fatale fired back through her column, writing of an Alice-band wearing fashion pundit with a "blood drained face" usually clad in an "unshapely, red jacket". Was Pillai alluding to Mahindra? Says Pillai: "If you put two and two together and don't get it wrong you have the answer". Clearly a case of Kitsch, Kitsch, Hota Hai.



ISSUE DATE

**AUG 16, 1977**

**M**aking her modest contribution to the increasing evidence that fame is all too fleeting, is Nafisa Ali. 21, leggy, languorous swimming prodigy. Her disappearance from the gossip columns is explained by her new interest—photography. Just as well, considering she has very limited views on anything else. Ali's leggy figure can now be spotted striding down Calcutta's streets, camera slung over curvaceous shoulder. Having given up swimming for studies, Ali has now given up studies for photography. "I like photography much more," she said, displaying pictures of people and poodles.



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new notes which  
I never knew existed.



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# GOOSEBUMPS AHEAD



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